

THE SENSE OF SIGHT IN RABBINIC CULTURE

This book studies the significance of sight in rabbinic cultures across Palestine and Mesopotamia (approximately first to seventh centuries). It tracks the extent and effect to which the rabbis living in the Greco-Roman and Persian worlds sought to appropriate, recast, and discipline contemporaneous understandings of sight. Sight had a crucial role to play in the realms of divinity, sexuality and gender, idolatry, and, ultimately, rabbinic subjectivity. The rabbis lived in a world in which the eyes were at once potent and vulnerable: eyes were thought to touch objects of vision, while also acting as an entryway into the viewer. Rabbis, Romans, Zoroastrians, Christians, and others were all concerned with the protection and exploitation of vision. Employing many different sources, Rachel Neis considers how the rabbis engaged varieties of late antique visualities, along with rabbinic narrative, exegetical, and legal strategies, as part of an effort to cultivate and mark a “rabbinic eye.”

RACHEL NEIS is an assistant professor in the History Department and in the Program for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan. Her interests include rabbinic literature and culture, the history of the senses, and comparative ancient and contemporary law and legal theory.

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

GREEK CULTURE IN THE ROMAN WORLD

Editors

SUSAN E. ALCOCK, Brown University
JAŚ ELSNER, Corpus Christi College, Oxford
SIMON GOLDHILL, University of Cambridge

The Greek culture of the Roman Empire offers a rich field of study. Extraordinary insights can be gained into processes of multicultural contact and exchange, political and ideological conflict, and the creativity of a changing, polyglot empire. During this period, many fundamental elements of Western society were being set in place: from the rise of Christianity, to an influential system of education, to long-lived artistic canons. This series is the first to focus on the response of Greek culture to its Roman imperial setting as a significant phenomenon in its own right. To this end, it will publish original and innovative research in the art, archaeology, epigraphy, history, philosophy, religion, and literature of the empire, with an emphasis on Greek material.

Recent titles in the series:

Local Knowledge and Microidentities in the Imperial Greek World

Edited by Tim Whitmarsh

Homer Between History and Fiction in Imperial Greek Literature

Laurence Kim

Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion

Verity Platt

Narrative, Identity and the Ancient Greek Novel

Tim Whitmarsh

Women and Visual Replication in Roman Imperial Art and Culture

Jennifer Trimble

The Maeander Valley: A Historical Geography from Antiquity to Byzantium

Peter Thonemann

Greece and the Augustan Cultural Revolution

J. S. Spawforth

Rethinking the Gods: Philosophical Readings of Religion in the Post-Hellenistic Period

Peter Van Nuffelen

Saints and Symposiasts: The Literature of Food and the Symposium in Greco-Roman and Early Christian Culture

Jason König

The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire: Sophists, Philosophers, and Christians

Kendra Eshleman

Religion and Identity in Porphyry of Tyre: The Limits of Hellenism in Late Antiquity

Aaron Johnson

THE SENSE OF SIGHT IN RABBINIC CULTURE

Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity

RACHEL NEIS



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107032514

© Rachel Neis 2013

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2013

Printed in the United Kingdom by CPI Group Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-03251-4 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

*To my grandparents, Ruchella and Pinchas Friedwald, and
Marta and Alex Neischiler, zikhronam li-verakhah*

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Note on rabbinic sources and translations</i>	xi
Introduction	I
1 Visual theory	18
2 God gazing and homovisuality	41
3 Heterovisuality, face-bread, and cherubs	82
4 Visual eros	113
5 Eyeing idols	170
6 Seeing sages	202
Conclusion	253
<i>Bibliography</i>	263
<i>Index of ancient sources</i>	307
<i>Index of subjects</i>	313

Acknowledgments

The completion of this book marks the end of a beginning: the chapter of my coming to America and my initiation into the world of the academy. I have the opportunity now to acknowledge not just those who have seen me through the writing (and rewriting) of the book itself, but also those debts of teaching and friendship that I have happily accrued since 1998. Kimberley Patton and Steven Katz encouraged me as I took my first steps in graduate work in the USA; a grant from the Memorial Foundation offered material support and a Wexner Graduate Fellowship offered that and much more. Shaye Cohen, Shaya Gafni, Jeffrey Hamburger, Jay Harris, and Peter Schäfer taught and advised me during graduate school and beyond. Steven Fine has been a mentor since early days. He and Georgia Frank read the earliest version of what was to become this book. I thank all these scholars for their mentorship and for helping me sharpen the earliest iterations of my thoughts on rabbinic visuality.

Along with a Rackham Faculty grant, a fellowship at the Frankel Institute of Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan in 2009–2010 gave me the chance to do crucial research. My thanks to Deborah Dash Moore and the other fellows for their helpful comments on portions of Chapters 5 and 6. Intense and rewarding conversations with Leora Auslander about the senses and Jewishness, during that year and since, were especially important to this book. I had the chance to present parts of this book and to receive invaluable feedback at the departments of Religious Studies at Yale University, Religious Studies and Judaic Studies at the University of Virginia, Religious Studies at Princeton University, and the Scholion at Hebrew University. For these opportunities and for their input, I thank Steven Fraade, Phylliss Granoff, Jim Ponet, Peter Schäfer, Greg Schmidt, Daniel Schwartz, Liz Shanks, and Zeev Weiss. Julia Thomas not only gave me incisive comments on parts of the book, but also delighted me with friendship and talk over sushi and Asahi. I owe a huge debt to Charlotte Fonrobert for her gracious mentorship and friendship, and for closely reading the entire

manuscript. Maya Barzilai, Ra'anana Boustani, Gil Klein, and Mika Natif have offered precious friendship along with generous readings – and rereadings – of my work. At crucial junctures Yaakov Elman, Susannah Heschel, Martin Jaffee, Jane Kanarek, Madeline Kochen, Patricia Cox Miller, Mika Natif, Aharon Oppenheimer, Aharon Shemesh, Daphna Stroumsa, Guy Stroumsa, Sarah Stroumsa, Paolo Squatriti, Philippa Townsend, and Steven Weitzmann read chapters of this book and gave perceptive comments.

The University of Michigan is a stimulating environment in which to think, talk, and work. My colleagues in History, Judaic Studies, and beyond, make this place what it is. Geoff Eley, Todd Endelman, Elliot Ginsburg, Deborah Dash Moore, Gina Morantz-Sanchez, Ian Moyer, Diane Owen Hughes, Christian de Pee, Scott Spector, Terry Tinkle, and Rebecca Zurier read all or much of this work in various phases, and have helped me improve it. Anita Norich and Val Kivelson have rocked as readers, mentors, and friends. Geoff Eley shared advice, friendship, and reminders of the SOC; Gina Morantz-Sanchez offered counsel and has never let me forget that my real name is Ruchella. Connie Hamlin, Karen Higgs-Payne, Tracy Darnell, and the other wonderful members of staff offered gracious assistance and guidance, often in answer to last-minute cries for help. Exchanges with Mika Auerback, Catherine Brown, John Carson, Deirdre de la Cruz, Jonathan Freedman, Dario Gaggio, Gabrielle Hecht, Kali Israel, Sue Juster, Mary Kelley, Kim Kunoff, Julian Levinson, Josh Miller, Farina Mir, Anthony Mora, and Leslie Pincus brightened dark wintry days.

My time writing this book in Ann Arbor has also been enriched by the company of Linda Jo Doctor, Phillis Engelbert, Elliot Ginsburg, Holly Hughes, Esther Newton, Ruby Tapia, Tanya Thunberg, Lisa McDonald, Alice Liberson, Laura Wernick, Lori Brooks, and Zane White. During extended visits and research in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, precious conversations with Sivan Shtang, Inbal Shamir, November Wanderin, and Natalie Weinstein allowed me to rethink the relationship between art, ideas, and politics. Sharon Gershoni and Sarra Lev, Shaya Gafni, Naomi Gafni, Aharon Oppenheimer and Oded Irshai offered warm friendship, good conversation, and advice.

Michael Sharp of Cambridge University Press has been patient and supportive throughout this process. I am grateful to Susan Alcock, Jaś Elsner, and Simon Goldhill for their support of my project as Series Editors, to Jaś Elsner and Simon Goldhill for having served as readers, and to the anonymous third reader for their enormously helpful critiques. My thanks to the superb editorial team at Cambridge University Press, including Liz Hanlon, Jodie Hodgson, and Jacqueline French. Parts of “Eyeing Idols:

Rabbinic Viewing Practices in Late Antiquity,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 102/4 (2012), 533–60 are reprinted in Chapter 5. Permission to print is gratefully acknowledged. My appreciation to the Ghetto Fighters’ Museum Archive for permission to print the image of Sam Herciger’s relief sculpture, *The Rabbis*. I thank Hannah Roussel and Julia Schapiro for their research assistance. David Lobenstine’s editorial brilliance and enthusiastic engagement helped make this book more intelligible. Adam Parker, a wonderful interlocutor and scholar, contributed invaluable research assistance, copy-editing, and bibliographic work, along with the index.

I am grateful to my parents for their love and support. I have been inspired, stimulated and supported by my ongoing conversations about vision, art, film, and life, with my siblings, Dalia and Daniel. Last but not least, I want to thank Daphna Stroumsa, whose presence has made the last two years of toil a delight; you have warmed my life.

Note on the cover image

I was drawn to the sculpture, “The Rabbis,” not only for its subject and the curious representation of eyes, but also for its “primitivist” and folk-art inspired style, in which I saw echoes of late antique funerary reliefs, particularly the bearded, large-eyed, funerary mask in Bet Shearim (the “mask” sarcophagus, Sarcophagus 84, Room XVI, Catacomb 20). While ancient sculpture may now seem to stare at us vacantly, in its time, eyes were usually filled in with color (for a marvellous example, see the painted pair of eyes on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gallery 156). The wide-open and unmarked eyes of Herciger’s *The Rabbis* draw in our gaze, but we remain uncertain as to how to register their blank stare. Are these rabbis sightless, or do they possess a vision that we cannot possibly hope to share?

Note on rabbinic sources and translations

In all citations of rabbinic sources, I have tried to use the best available edition or manuscript. I generally follow the editions and manuscripts listed below; where I depart from these texts, I have noted which manuscript or edition I follow and my reasons for doing so. All translations of biblical and rabbinic sources are my own, unless noted otherwise. All Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek phrases in the text are transliterated for the benefit of the non-specialist. For names, places, and words that have entered the English vernacular, I use the common English spelling.

Citations from rabbinic texts are according to SBL style guidelines: *m.* precedes names of Mishnaic tractates; *t.* for Tosefta; *y.* for the Palestinian Talmud (Yerushalmi); and *b.* for the Bavli. Midrashic collections and other rabbinic works are nearly always cited by their full name.

Mishnah

Albeck, Hanokh (ed.), *Shishah Sidre Mishnah*, 6 vols. (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1957–1959)
Ms. Kaufmann A 50 (Budapest, Akademia), available online via the National Library of Israel at <http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/>

Tosefta

Lieberman, Saul (ed.), *The Tosefta*, 4 vols. (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1955–1973)
Zuckerman, M. S. (ed.), *Tosefta, Based on the Erfurt and Vienna Codices* (repr. Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1970)

Palestinian Talmud

Sussmann, Yaakov (ed.), *Talmud Yerushalmi* (Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2001)

Babylonian Talmud

Vilna edition: *The Babylonian Talmud* (Vilna: The Widow and Brothers Romm, 1880–1886)

Though I use the Vilna edition as the base text, I have also consulted available manuscripts and early printed editions. I have indicated in the notes where variant readings have informed my translation or analysis.

Midrash Halakhah

- Horowitz, H. S. and Israel A. Rabin (eds.), *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma'el* (Frankfurt, 1928–1931; repr. Jerusalem: Bamberger and Wahrmann, 1970)
- Epstein, J. N. and Ezra Z. Melamed (eds.), *Mekhilta Derabbi Shim'on b. Yoḥai* (Jerusalem: Mekitse Nirdamim, 1956)
- Weiss, Isaac Hirsch (ed.), *Sifra deve Rav: hu' Sefer Torat Kohanim [to Leviticus]* (Vienna, 1862; repr. New York: Om Publishing Company, 1946)
- Horowitz, H. S. (ed.), *Sifre deve Rav [to Numbers]* (Leipzig, 1917; repr. Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1966)
- Finkelstein, Louis (ed.), *Sifre on Deuteronomy* (Berlin: Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums, 1939; repr. New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1969)

Midrash Aggadah

- Midrash Rabbah is cited from the Vilna edition, 2 vols. (Vilna, 1879; repr. New York: E. Grossman, 1953), except for the following:
- Genesis Rabbah*: Theodor, Judah and Hanokh Albeck (eds.), *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1912–1927; repr. Jerusalem: Shalem Books, 1996)
- Lamentations Rabbah*: Buber, Salomon (ed.), *Midrash Ekhah Rabbah* (Vilna: Romm, 1899)
- Leviticus Rabbah*: Margaliot, M. (ed.), *Midrash Vayiqra Rabbah*, 2 vols. (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1993)
- Mandelbaum, Bernard (ed.), *Pesiḳta Derav Kahana*, 2 vols. (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1987)
- Friedmann, Meir (Ish Shalom) (ed.), *Pesiḳta Rabbati* (Vienna, 1880)

Introduction

“Hath not a Jew eyes?”

Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*

“Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see.”

Psalms 69:24; Romans 11:10

Across a long line of seemingly disparate writings – from the Gospel of John to Augustine’s sermons, from Shakespeare’s Shylock to Martin Jay’s history of the denigration of vision – an idea has persisted of a Jewish resistance to, or even incapacity for, vision. This enduring idea originates in vivid intuitions and ongoing assumptions about the biblical second commandment. The ancient taboo, “You shall not make graven images” (Exodus 20:4, put in the mouth of no less than the deity and echoed in prophetic denunciations), has been strongly associated with Jewishness in a way that the third commandment, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain” (Exodus 20:7), for instance, has not.

Heinrich Graetz’s declaration in 1846, “Paganism sees its god, Judaism hears him,” still resonates as an explanation for an apparent Jewish antipathy toward images, and even toward vision itself.¹ And yet, it has been amply shown – from the seals and figurines of eighth- and seventh-century BCE Israelites to the mosaics of late-antique Palestinian synagogues more than a thousand years later – that Jews did in fact make and use images, even in religious contexts.² The prohibition against idolatry, to the extent that it was ever heeded, was interpreted and fulfilled in a variety of ways. Some refrained from making figurative images and restricted their art to aniconic images; certainly many refrained specifically from representing

¹ Graetz, *Structure of Jewish History*, 68.

² There is by now an enormous literature on this topic. For important recent examples, see the following and bibliographies therein: Meyers, “Jewish art and architecture”; Fine, *Art and Judaism*; Olin, *A Nation Without Art*; Friedheim, “Historical considerations.”

God. But this restraint did not always hold, and some even went so far as to represent the divine.

The notion that Jews rejected images in a wholesale, monolithic fashion is thus factually weak, but there is a much more fundamental problem with our all-too-common link between the prohibition against idolatry and Jewish antipathy toward vision. This is the understandable but logically unnecessary conflation that is so often made between sight and image-making. After all, visual images – that is, humanly produced artifacts, material objects, and pictorial representations – do not exhaust the range of objects in our field of vision. While images can be useful objects with which to “think” vision,³ the human eye sees a far broader range of phenomena, from landscapes to animals, from the built environment to other humans, and beyond. Thus, even if there really were a consistent Jewish iconophobia, a Jewish antipathy toward vision as such need not necessarily follow. So too, even if Graetz was right about the second commandment being (consistently) understood as a prohibition against depicting the Jewish God (as opposed to just other, competing deities) or as ruling out all representation (divine or otherwise), this would still not preclude the possibility that late-antique Jews *saw* God; and it certainly does not preclude the possibility that Jews saw much more besides.

Confusion about the interpretive history and material impact of the second commandment, alongside the unexamined conflation of a particular form of representation (images) and a mode of perception (the sense of vision), has had curious consequences. The idea of an absent or negative Jewish visuality, which we can gloss for the purposes of this discussion as “ways of being visual,” has been accepted, even valorized, whether in terms of philosophical or theological abstraction or in terms of an associated artistic aniconism. The alleged long-lived Jewish elevation of the auditory over the visual, or the denigration of vision, finds echoes in the writings of philosophers and intellectual historians such as Kant, Levinas, Derrida, and Jay, and resonates with the oft-argued binary between Jewish and Christian modalities, as well as with the writings of certain medieval Jewish rationalist philosophers. Relatedly, Jewish vision has often been assimilated into treatments of the production and use of artistic images, rather than in its own sensory terms. There are some important exceptions to this, but by and large Jewish vision, as such, has been understudied.⁴

³ Paraphrasing Claude Lévi-Strauss’s *bonnes à penser* (Lévi-Strauss, *Le totémisme*, 127–28).

⁴ The exceptions include the following important works, to which my own stands in genuine debt: Boyarin, “Ocular desire”; Wolfson, *Speculum*; Bland, *Artless Jew*; Bregman, “Seeing with the sages”;

Schematically speaking, the dominant narrative of the history of vision usually begins in the ancient Greek world, progresses to the Roman republic and empire, nods further east to medieval Islamic optics – mostly in terms of its translation, preservation, and engagement with Greek optical theory – makes its way back (home) to the European middle ages, and then vaults toward modernity and the rise of new visual technologies.⁵ The ancient rabbis are often the *locus classicus* of the supposed antipathy towards images and, by logically fallacious extension, vision more broadly. By giving eyes to ancient Jews, and particularly to the rabbis of the first several centuries CE, this book offers an additional perspective on a formative era that has only recently begun to be studied for what it reveals of Christian and Greco-Roman visualities.

We might ask how this story changes if we consider the viscosity of late-antique rabbis, who, as we will see, offer us an abundant sense of the importance of sight. How does this consideration complicate or expand what we know about vision's histories, and about late-antique history and Jewish history, in general? This brings us to two intertwined questions, the first of which concerns what it means to study the history of "Jewish" or "rabbinic" vision, and the second of which relates to studying the history of vision in the first place.

Let us begin with the second question, which involves elaborating on the study of vision. While vision is commonly understood to refer to the perceptual sense of sight, the premise of this study, shared by historians and art historians alike, is that there is more to seeing than the physiological, biological, and neurocognitive processes that constitute visual perception. Vision, or "visuality" as some like to distinguish,⁶ can also be studied through the cultural and historical forces that shape the range of phenomena known as seeing. In other words, aside from accounts in physics, physiology, optics, ophthalmology, and neuroscience (the last of

and Bregman, "Aqedah." For a recent, innovative study on the sense of smell in rabbinic literature, see Green, *Aroma of Righteousness*.

⁵ For example Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*; Wade, *A Natural History of Vision* mentions "Islamic" scholars twice (14, 66) and China once (26), but otherwise begins in Greece and stays in Europe; Darrigol, *A History of Optics*, 1, explains that despite the existence of ancient Indian and Chinese optical theories, "the Greek case is the only one of interest here, because it is the one that led to a corpus of specialized literature on which later European and Mediterranean science depended." Examples of studies that either integrate or focus on ancient non-Western theories of vision include: Selin (ed.), *Encyclopedia*, s.v., "Optics in Chinese science," 193–95, and "Optics in the Islamic world," 795–99; Vogel and Berke, *Brief History of Vision*, which is a world history of sorts; Gonda, *Eye and Gaze*; Graham and Sivin, "A systematic approach"; Brown and Bergeton, "'Seeing' like a sage"; Nylan, "Beliefs about seeing"; Gearney, *Epistemology*; Subbarayappa, "The physical world"; Qiupeng, "Optics"; McMahan, *Empty Vision*.

⁶ I address the distinctions, or lack thereof, between these two terms in the next chapter.

which are quite contested and rapidly evolving), there is a story to be told about what seeing has meant and how it has functioned across a variety of registers (from society to sociality, from race to gender to class) in different times and places.

The insight that vision has a history is related to the insertion of the body into history by philosophers, historians, literary scholars, and others.⁷ Vision, along with the body as a whole, is something that is understood, directed, conditioned, and experienced differently depending on its cultural settings. It can be studied across a range of arenas from the everyday (what is understood as visible/invisible, how people are recognized and categorized, how landscapes are navigated, how empirical observations are made, how the physical and social world is organized) to the sublime (how to see gods, view spectacles, observe bacteria, escape the evil eye, fall in love “at first sight”). As far as the rabbis go, my primary interest is in a cultural history of vision. I thus examine a broad spectrum of rabbinic discourse to understand how vision assuaged and exacerbated the hopes and fears of everyday life; how it served to channel encounters with the landscape and built environment; how it birthed ideas about and influenced practices of piety; and how it shaped the social, political, ethnic, gendered, and sexual subject.⁸

Terms like “visuality,” “viewing practices or habits,” “modes of seeing,” or what art historian Michael Baxandall called “the period eye,” indicate the ways in which meanings, understandings, and seeing itself shift according to differing cultural conditions.⁹ Thus, in the Renaissance, developments in mathematics and architecture, particularly the invention of single-point perspective, gave rise to new ways not only of representing the visual but also of experiencing it.¹⁰ Likewise, in the nineteenth century, emergent representational and scientific technologies made for new ways of understanding how vision worked, along with new modes of seeing. So too the rise of surveillance technologies in the twentieth and twenty-first

⁷ On vision's history: Wartofsky, “Picturing and representing”; Levin, *The Opening of Vision*, 490. On the body's history: Bynum, “The female body,” 171; Porter, “History of the body.”

⁸ My work is in dialogue with the more recent studies related to late-antique visuality (on which more below), but it is also indebted to scholars on the history of the senses, such as Lucien Febvre (the history of sensibilities), Alain Corbin (sound, smell), David Howes (the sensorium), Mark M. Smith (sound and other senses), and Susan Ashbrook Harvey (smell): Febvre, “Sensibility and history”; Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant*; Corbin, *Village Bells*; Howes, *Sensual Relations*; Smith, *Sensing the Past*; Harvey, *Scenting Salvation*; and Green, *Aroma of Righteousness*.

⁹ Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, 29–103.

¹⁰ Panofsky, *Perspective*. For psychological or perceptualist analyses of viewing, see Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*; Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*.

centuries shaped and continue to shape visual experience.¹¹ As we will see, in the late-antique era – for our purposes, roughly the third to seventh centuries CE – ideas about the mechanics of vision shaped a variety of realms ranging from philosophy, medicine, and magic, to religion, ritual, and politics.¹² In a world in which the body and soul were thought to be directly impacted by what the eyes saw, vision was a charged matter.

Late antiquity has been subject to a “visual turn” both as a scholarly trend in the past decade or so, and as a characterization of the period itself.¹³ This turn to the visual has mostly focused on Greco-Roman modes of viewing, whether in representational terms of the shift from naturalistic to symbolic styles between the late-Roman and early-Byzantine period, or in terms of new forms of visual piety that emerged in the fourth and fifth centuries. The late-antique world, it seems, was becoming more visual. To this emerging picture of late-antique visuality, I add the perspective of those ancient Jews known as the rabbis. I situate an increasing preoccupation with the visual of post-third-century rabbis, in the context of this “visual turn.” We will continue to address the study of vision in the next chapter, but this brings us back to our first question: what does it mean to study Jewish or rabbinic vision? In considering this, we must briefly relate to even more basic, and contested, questions about the rabbis and their status among late-antique Jews.

The rabbis seem to have begun as a small, loosely connected group of sages that formed some time in the first, and certainly by the second, century CE. This group produced a Jewishness grounded in *talmud torah*, the practice of Torah study. The early rabbis, the Tannaim (late first- to early third-century Palestine), and the later rabbis, the Amoraim (third- to fifth-century Palestine, and third- to sixth-century Babylonia), produced copious literature, marked by an insistent scholasticism. These writings give us a lens onto an early Jewish social formation, at once conservative and innovative in its active interpretation of scripture, its emphatic attention to

¹¹ Cray, *Techniques of the Observer*. We might want to question the existence of a one-to-one relationship between the *forms* of representation (e.g. single-point perspective, abstraction, etc.) and the *experience* of vision; in other words, we might not want to assume a correspondence theory of representation and perception. See Hillis, *Digital Sensations*, esp. 117–20; Davis, *Theory of Visual Culture*.

¹² For discussion of the terms and periodizations such as “late antiquity,” “late Roman,” and “Byzantine”: Ando, “Decline, fall and transformation”; Vessey, “Demise.” For the content and impact of various theories of vision on philosophy, medicine, and magic: Smith, *Ptolemy’s Theory of Visual Perception*; Simon, *Le regard*; Simon, *Archéologie*. For excellent summaries of late-antique visual theories: Morales, *Vision and Narrative*; Frank, *Memory*, 123–33.

¹³ Just some examples of this work include Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*; Francis, “Living icons”; Frank, *Memory*; Goldhill, “Erotic eye”; Morales, *Vision and Narrative*.

halakhah (law), and its engagement with a vast range of mythic, narrative, ritual, and prosaic matters. We will address the possible impact of the rabbinic role and status in wider Jewish Palestinian and Babylonian societies in our study of rabbinic visuality below and throughout these pages.

At this point, we may acknowledge that the rabbinic project – as manifest not only in many explicit statements of the rabbis, but also in the very transmission, collection, organization, and redaction of rabbinic teachings themselves into various literary collections, regardless of their effects and impacts on wider Jewish and other circles – was in considerable measure about perpetuating rabbinic teachings and rabbinic-style *talmud torah* as a way of life and praxis. It was, in other words, largely about producing and reproducing rabbis. I will argue throughout this book that sight – and its interpretation, inscription, deployment, ritualization, and curtailment – was an important vehicle for conceiving this larger rabbinic project. In this sense, we can talk of a robust rabbinic visuality emerging during the time of the Amoraim, one that was vital to the formation of rabbinic subjectivity.¹⁴

This brings us back to the question of what it means to study Jewish or rabbinic vision. In arguing for the emergence of a rabbinic visuality, I do not mean to claim that an essential, unified, undifferentiated, or singular rabbinic way of seeing existed over centuries, across Palestine and Babylonia, and stood apart from preceding or contemporaneous visualities. While the rabbis and others may have at times liked to suggest that this was the case, it is precisely such claims about an inherently Jewish or rabbinic way of seeing that I wish to question and unpack. For example, at times rabbinic writings mark particular modes of seeing, or refraining from seeing, as peculiarly rabbinic (this is how “disciples of sages” look or refrain from looking). At other times ways of seeing are characterized as sinful

¹⁴ I tend to refer to rabbinic visuality rather than a rabbinic “regime” partly in acknowledgment that rabbinic ways of seeing were those of a minority, perhaps among Jews and certainly among those who were not Jewish. Scholars talk of modernist, dominant, cinematic, gendered, or colonial visual regimes not just to emphasize the different cultural ways of seeing, but also to express their ordering nature. See the definition of a scopic regime as a “non-natural visual order operating on a pre-reflective level to determine the dominant protocols of seeing and being on view in a specific culture at a specific time” in Jay, “Scopic regime.” On late-antique subject formation: Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology*, 1–22; Wills, “Ascetic theology”; Schofer, “Self, subject and chosen subjection.” Foucault defines “techniques of the self” as “the procedures, which no doubt exist in every civilization, suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge” (Foucault, *Ethics*, 87). The term “rabbinic subject” or “rabbinic subjectivity” is meant to convey the project of rabbinic self-construction and something about the process that produces the sense of a rabbinic self. The terms “subject,” “subjectivity,” and “subject formation” as historical concepts and heuristic constructs are, of course, much debated. For example: Strozier, *Foucault, Subjectivity, and Identity*, and Spivak, “Can the subaltern speak?”

and essentially not rabbinic (this is how various others, such as the *min* – heretic; the *‘am ha’arets* – common, uneducated Jews; non-Jews; women, look). As we decipher the extent to which rabbinic and nonrabbinic vision is marked one way or another, we also ask about the extent to which it is inflected aside from these markings. To what extent is vision that is (self-styled as) rabbinic inflected with “Roman” or “Palestinian” or “Babylonian” ways of seeing?¹⁵ How is it specifically “scholastic” or “male”? We note the extent to which the rabbis worry about and trouble to constitute vision along gendered, religious, and ethnic lines. At the same time, they rarely acknowledge that their conceptions of the basic mechanics of vision across the realms of the sacred and the sexual have little to do with anything that is essentially rabbinic or Jewish.

Entertaining such considerations about the contours of a peculiarly rabbinic relation to the sense of sight means that while I focus chiefly on the rabbis and on the extensive sources they left, I seek to do so in conjunction with contemporaneous nonrabbinic evidence. In studying the intertwining and averted gazes of rabbis, everyday Jews, Romans, Christians, Zoroastrians, and others, we track the congruences between rabbinized and contemporaneous visualities. A curious example of this is in the rabbinic discourse on looking at the sacred images of others. While couched in the rabbinic language of idolatry and halakhic reasoning, the rabbinic visual strategies even at their ostensibly most rejectionist, rely upon contemporaneous modes of cultic viewing. The rabbis provide us with an excellent example (rather than a unique instance) of how useful vision could be. This study of rabbinic vision, then, does not argue for an inherently rabbinic eye (whether culturally or biologically grounded).

¹⁵ Such questions are regularly asked about the rabbis of Palestine and Babylonia, both in general and with respect to different issues. Understanding the rabbis as part of a wider “Greco-Roman” or “Eastern Roman” culture is a basic part of the toolkit of scholars of rabbinic texts and ancient Jewish history. For example, scholars have compared Palestinian rabbis to scholars; presented them as a provincial sub-elite; sought to understand their values vis-à-vis Roman notions of deference; compared their ethical literature to Roman, philosophical, and Christian literature (Cohen, “Patriarchs and scholars”; Lapin, “Hegemony”; Schwartz, *Mediterranean Society*; Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography*). More recent studies have attended to the specificities of Babylonian rabbinic society, located at a meeting point between various cultures, and the Persian empire, with its Zoroastrian priesthood and Sasanian-Perisan culture. Joel Walker urges us not to over-read the Persian-Zoroastrian and the Greco-Roman in contrastive terms, describing the shared “philosophical *koine*” between Iran and Rome (Walker, *Mar Qardagh*, 12). Studies that point to the Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis as part of a larger Roman East, culturally speaking, include: Becker, “Comparative study”; Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*, 61–86; Boyarin, “Hellenism.” For studies that highlight the Persian-Zoroastrian milieu of the Babylonian rabbis, see Secunda, “Talmudic text and Iranian context”; Elman, “Middle Persian culture”; Herman, “The story of Rav Kahana.” We will discuss Zoroastrian ideas about vision and the broader Indo-Iranian *koine* in the next chapter.

Rather, the argument goes in the opposite direction: Vision was harnessed in order to shape rabbinic subjectivity. To the extent that this subjectivity was in turn about the cultivation of a sense of uniqueness or exclusiveness, then vision played its part in this too, both in terms of rhetoric and in terms of the substantive shaping of the gaze. The articulation of this complex relationship between the senses and the subject is partly enabled by the complex affiliations, locations, and negotiations of this particular group of sages. To answer our earlier question: this is one of the ways that studying the rabbis and vision allows us to contribute to the broader histories of late antiquity and visuality.

More than just studying the rabbis for yet another perspective, we study the ways in which these rabbinic perspectives are themselves imbricated in various cultural formations. The rabbis' reach across Palestine and Babylonia allows our understanding of ancient visuality to cross the usual lines of empire, within which many studies are confined. Their travel back and forth between the Roman-Christian and Sassanian-Zoroastrian-Persian empires becomes a conduit for a variety of cultural and religious ways of seeing. Rabbinic visuality thus offers no unique, *sui generis* account of vision, but, in its very complex locatedness and embeddedness, it allows us to consider what it means to see (as minorities and provincials) under differing conditions of empire. It is thus that the study of rabbinic visuality not only challenges assumptions about whose vision counts as an object of study, but also illuminates the history of late antiquity in new ways by providing an additional lens onto histories of power, religion, ethnicity, and identity.

The rabbis, like others in the Mediterranean and Near Eastern world, understood sight to be loaded precisely because to see something was to be spiritually and physically affected by it. Conversely, looking at an object could affect it as well. These physical implications of vision reveal what is at stake in early rabbinic attempts to encode certain visual experiences liturgically, ensuring that a visual object would be marked, and indeed viewed, in the prescribed manner. We see the beginnings of such attempts in the rabbinic lists of "vision" blessings in the tractate *Berakhot* ("blessings") of the Mishnah and Tosefta, edited in the third century:

One who sees (*harō'eh*) a place where miracles were performed for Israel says, "Blessed is the one who performed miracles for our ancestors in this place."

[One who sees] a place from which idolatry had been uprooted says, "Blessed is the one who rooted out idolatry from our land."

[One who sees] shooting stars, earthquakes, lightning, thunder, and storms says, "Blessed is the one whose power fill the world."

[One who sees] mountains, hills, seas, rivers, and deserts says, "Blessed is the one who makes creation." R. Judah says, "One who sees the great [Mediterranean] sea says, 'Blessed is the one who made the great sea,' but only if he sees it occasionally."¹⁶

One who sees idolatry says, "Blessed is the one who is slow to anger."

[One who sees] a place from which idolatry had been rooted out says, "Blessed is the one who rooted out idolatry from our land. May it be your will Lord our God that idolatry be rooted out from all the places of Israel, and that the hearts of your servants return to your worship."

One who sees a crowd says, "Blessed is the wise one of secrets, for their faces are not like one another nor are their opinions like one another . . ."

One who sees a dark person, a pale person,¹⁷ a red person, an albino, an extremely tall person, a very small person (a deaf person, a mentally incompetent person, and a drunk person) says, "Blessed is the one who varies creatures."

[One who sees] an amputee, a lame person, a blind person, or a person stricken with boils says, "Blessed is the true judge."

One who sees beautiful human beings or beautiful trees says, "Blessed is the one who has created such beautiful creatures."

One who sees a rainbow in a cloud says, "Blessed is the one who is faithful to his covenant, who remembers the covenant."

One who was walking among the graves says, "Blessed is the one who knows your number. He will judge you, and he will resurrect you to judgment. Blessed is the one who is faithful to his word, who resurrects the dead."

One who sees the sun, the moon, the stars, or the constellations says, "Blessed is the one who makes creation." R. Judah says, "One who blesses over the sun, this is the way of heresy (lit. another way)." And R. Judah would say, "One who sees the sea at regular intervals and something about it has changed, he must bless."¹⁸

These laws prescribe the uttering of specific blessings upon seeing a range of visual objects, from sites of miracles to idolatry absent or present, from a variety of natural phenomena to a panoply of "unusual" persons. Here the Tannaim seek to ritualize, guide, and shape affect for and experience of each visual object. Aside from the remarkable bundling of items in their individual rules, these lists, read as a unit with the iteration of "one who sees X says Y (*haro'eh X omer Y*)," constitute instruction manuals on how to

¹⁶ *M. Berakhot* 9:1–2.

¹⁷ The term *boreq* appears only in Ms. Vienna. See Lieberman's suggestion to emend to *boheq* (Lieberman, *Tosefta*, vol. 1, 34, n. 28).

¹⁸ *T. Berakhot* 6:2–6.

perform vision. Even a preliminary look at these sources reveals the legacies of biblical narrative, the vicissitudes of the material landscape under Roman rule, the long shadow of the lost temple, apotropaic responses to good and bad fortune, and concerns about heresy.

This is an early example of how the rabbis sought to legislate and rabbinize vision. They did so by filtering a variety of visual objects in the landscape through a particular theological, halakhic lens that at once naturalizes and ritualizes seeing itself. Set within the halakhic framework of the tractate *Berakhot*, as well as within the larger context of the Mishnah and Tosefta, the rabbinization of vision is transparent to the point of invisibility, concealed in plain view within the very production, preservation, and stylization of rules that these vast works encode.

It is through just such a formulation of rules, narratives, rituals, interpretations, and everyday advice that the rabbis deployed, subverted, mimicked, opposed, resisted, “rabbinized,” or assumed contemporaneous modes of viewing. As we examine the moments of convergence and difference between rabbis and others, we will try to avoid binary explanations of either influence or deliberate resistance on the part of the rabbis.¹⁹ The rabbis turn out to be neither blinkered navel-gazers nor wide-eyed assimilationists, but rather participants in the contemporary visual *koine*, to a sometimes surprising degree.

Close readings of Palestinian (third- to fourth-, or early fifth-century) and Babylonian (third- to sixth-, or seventh-century) collections of rabbinic law, narrative, and exegesis that crystallize around the theme of sight and vision reveal the rabbis participating in the late-antique visual *koine* even when casting vision in their own idiosyncratic terms. In particular, I argue that the “visual turn” ascribed to late-antique piety, and to Greco-Roman and Christian culture, is a hitherto overlooked but crucial component of later (that is, Amoraic and later), rabbinic piety.²⁰ I examine this phenomenon in legal, narrative, exegetical, homiletical, and liturgical sources across a variety of arenas: how the rabbis imagined and produced memories of seeing God in the temple pilgrimage centuries after the temple’s destruction; how they dealt with the prevalent notion that sight and sexuality were intertwined; and how they attempted to steer Jewish eyes away from “idols,” and toward their own (sagely) persons as “icons” of the sacred.

¹⁹ A good argument for this is found in Satlow, “Beyond influence.” For a critical treatment of comparison, notions of similarity, influence, and dispersion, see Smith, “In comparison.”

²⁰ And perhaps of late-antique Zoroastrian piety, though this needs further study. See the call for work in this direction in Canepa, “Theorizing cross-cultural interaction.” On the importance of vision in ritual in ancient India, see Gonda, *Eye and Gaze*.

Brief Introduction to the Rabbinic Corpus

While I engage sources outside of the rabbinic corpus, the primary focus of my analysis is the literature of the rabbis. The writings of the Tannaim, those sages living in first- and second-century CE Roman Palestine, consist of documents redacted in roughly the third century in Palestine. They include the Mishnah, an anthology of mostly legal material (laws, debates, narrative); the Tosefta, a kind of companion volume to the Mishnah; and exegetical run-along commentaries to the Hebrew Bible (referred to as midrash, pl. midrashim): the *Sifre* (on Numbers and Deuteronomy), the *Sifra* (on Leviticus), and the two texts called *Mekhilta* (on Exodus).²¹ Tannaitic teachings also appear frequently in post-Tannaitic documents.²²

As mentioned, the Tannaitic sages were likely loosely organized as a small, informal group. The redaction of the Mishnah, sponsored by R. Judah the Patriarch (also known simply as “Rabbi”), seems to signal or presage the coalescence of a self-conscious and increasingly coherent rabbinic movement. The Mishnah formed a centerpiece of the rabbinic curriculum, what Lawrence Schiffman dubs “the New Scripture,” the cornerstone of the most significant energy and output of later (i.e. Amoraic and later) rabbinic study: the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds.²³ These documents, as well as several collections of midrashim, contain the teachings of the

²¹ A sizable proportion of the Mishnah’s content concerns cultic, sacrificial, temple, and purity-related matters. Other topics treated include: Sabbath and festival laws; laws governing interactions with “idolatry” and idolaters; marriage and family law; and, what would today be considered civil, criminal, and procedural law. Without going into the complicated and contested relationships between all these documents in terms of agenda, chronology, rabbinic schools of interpretation, and the like, one might say that there are basic genre differences between the Mishnah and Tosefta and the legal midrashim (*midreshe halakhah*) that point to differing scholastic enterprises. (The relationship between the Mishnah and the Tosefta remains the subject of present investigation. For recent accounts thereof, see Friedman, *Tosefta Atiqta* and Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*.) The Mishnah and its companion work, the Tosefta, are freestanding legal compendia, with traditions organized topically on both smaller and larger scales in terms of their individual *halakhot* and their chapters, tractates, and orders. Legal midrash adheres closely to the biblical text, both in terms of its organization and sequence, and in terms of its approach, which is to derive halakhah (by a variety of interpretive techniques) from the biblical text. The level of scrutiny applied to biblical verses, words, and particles in order to derive law (or other matters) therefrom, as well as the Mishnah’s formal design as something like a legal compendium (even if it is not a comprehensive “code”) bear the hallmarks of rabbinic creativity. For recent surveys, see Kraemer, “The Mishnah”; Mandel, “The Tosefta”; Harris, “Midrash Halachah”; Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, 108–63, 247–75.

²² On the reliability of such sources, see Stemberger, “Narrative baraitot”; Stemberger, “Dating rabbinic traditions.” See also Elman, *Authority and Tradition*; Fox and Meacham (eds.), *Introducing Tosefta*; Moreshet, “The Hebrew *baraitot*”; Moreshet, “New and revived verbs”; Moreshet, “Further studies”; Friedman, “Baraitot.”

²³ Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition*, 177–200; although the authority of the Mishnah is by no means absolute, see Kraemer, “The Mishnah,” 313–14.

Amoraim, those rabbinic sages living in Palestine and Babylonia from the third to fourth and third to sixth centuries, respectively.

The Talmuds are organized as commentaries that follow the Mishnah. They draw upon a variety of earlier Tannaitic teachings, some not in extant collections, as well as those of Amoraim from both Palestine and Babylonia.²⁴ The Palestinian Talmud (the Yerushalmi) was redacted in roughly the late fourth (or early fifth) century, while the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud (the Bavli) may have continued through the seventh century. Debates persist, particularly about the length and extent of Babylonian redactional activity.²⁵ The Bavli in particular contains a mix of types of writing, genres, and topics that were often treated discretely in late-antique (and late-antique Jewish) literature: laws, case law, legal (halakhic) debate, rabbinic exegesis of the Bible (*midrash*), narrative (*aggadah*), ethics, medicine, magic, science, and more.²⁶

The rabbinic corpus is thus a stratified, ramified, and complexly interrelated body of writings, whose numerous authors and even more numerous sources cross imperial, linguistic, and cultural boundaries and whose analysis presents difficulties to literary scholars and historians alike.²⁷ Recent histories of ancient and late-antique Judaism have challenged previous assumptions about the central role of the rabbis in wider Jewish society and have instead portrayed them as a small, separatist, and even relatively

²⁴ For surveys on the Yerushalmi and the Bavli, see Moscovitz, "Formation and character"; Kalmin, "Formation and character"; Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, 164–224; Bokser, "Annotated"; Goodblatt, "The Babylonian Talmud."

²⁵ The redaction of the Bavli was traditionally dated to the fifth century, but current scholarship suggests that it went on till the sixth, seventh, or even early eighth century. Debate ranges on the extent of the weight of the editorial hand of the post-Amoraic sages, the Stammaim. Those such as Friedman and Rubenstein argue for a heavy editorial hand and, therefore, that much material in the Bavli ought to be regarded as late and so heavily reworked as to be more reflective of sixth-century through 700 CE Babylonian culture than early Amoraic culture. See Halivni, *Introductions*; Friedman, "Some structural patterns"; Friedman, "The chapter *Ha'ishah Rabbah*"; Rubenstein, "Introduction." Others dispute this to differing degrees: Kalmin, "Formation and character"; Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*, 10–12; Brody, "The anonymous Talmud"; Gafni, "Talmudic history."

²⁶ On the encyclopedic character of the Bavli, see Kalmin, "Formation and character," 841.

²⁷ On the collective nature of rabbinic authorship, see Jaffee, "Rabbinic authorship." For an important volume on the value and difficulties of rabbinic literature for historical evidence, see Goodman and Alexander (eds.), *Rabbinic Texts*. On the difficulties of dealing with various kinds of parallels between and within the Palestinian and Babylonian corpora, see Cohen (ed.), *The Synoptic Problem*; Moscovitz, "Transferred *sugyot*"; Moscovitz, "Relationship"; Rosenthal, "Traditions from the Land of Israel"; Hayes, *Between*; Gray, *A Talmud in Exile*. Additional related issues in reading rabbinic literature are the reliability of attributions in rabbinic sources and the fact that our witnesses to rabbinic texts are primarily medieval. On the former, see Kalmin, "Formation and character," 860–61; Gray, "Is critical rabbinic biography possible?"; Green, "What's in a name?" On the latter, see the updated debate between Schäfer, "Research" and Milikowsky, "The *status quaestionis*"; Veltri, "Best text."

unknown collection of loosely affiliated sages who nonetheless claimed exclusive authority over biblical interpretation, law, and ritual.²⁸ This challenging of earlier historiographic paradigms that viewed the rabbis as Jewish leaders has ushered in ever more careful use of rabbinic writings for the reconstruction of ancient Jewish society and culture more broadly.²⁹ Even aside from such salutary caution, the very nature of rabbinic documents – their complex textuality, their protracted and repeated processes of collection, composition, and editing – hinders the straightforward extraction of social and cultural history. These are literary materials that have been cumulatively redacted, have undergone substantive linguistic and stylistic shifts along the way, and whose transition from putative, original, oral forms is extremely hard (some would say impossible) to reconstruct.³⁰

In this study it is the very partiality of the rabbis, whether characterized as marginal or as a minority among Jews (and certainly among broader populations of Palestine and Babylonia), that is of interest.³¹ The ways that these sources exclude or occlude other perspectives, persons, and objects in their attempts to shape vision allow us to see how the rabbis sought to impose their perspective on their world. Even if unsuccessful, the fact that the rabbis are staking their claim for legislating Jews, and even those who are not Jewish (or human for that matter), through vision, is itself worthy of study.³²

²⁸ See Cohen, “Place of the rabbis”; Lapin, “Origins and development”; Schwartz, “Political, social, and economic life”; Goodblatt, “Political and social history.” For the nuanced distinction between “the issue of rabbinic hegemony and authority on the one hand and the matter of the normativity of rabbinic religion on the other,” see Levine, “Rabbis, preachers, and aggadists,” 278.

²⁹ While there is copious rabbinic literary evidence, other kinds of evidence, whether literary, archaeological, or epigraphical is relatively small.

³⁰ These literary features do exist in other premodern texts. We might compare the difficulties of rabbinic texts to those faced by students of the (very roughly contemporaneous) often anonymously and multiply-authored and redacted Brahmanical *dharmaśūtra* and *dharmaśāstra*, or Buddhist vinaya writings. In those fields of scholarship there are similar debates about the dating of documents and materials within them; inter-textual relationships; distinguishing between the “normative,” “descriptive,” and “prescriptive” valences of such sources; the relationship of “archaeological” and “textual” sources; the authority and status of Brahmins and monks. For an excellent discussion of the difficulties a historian faces when studying a piece of evidence that belongs to multiple periods, coupled with the tendency to mine such documents for historical data without attending to their textuality and their “worklike” (as opposed to “documentary”) elements that seek to effect and affect their audiences, see Finnegan, “For the sake of women, too.”

³¹ I am taken with the formulation of Natalie Dohrman, who argues that rabbinic text “*in its literariness*” (that is, as a source for history of ideas, rather than as a repository of more or less viable data for reporting history on the ground) is a valuable site for mining the *mentalité* of rabbinic culture (emphasis in original); (Dohrman, “Boundaries of the law,” 83–84).

³² On the rhetorical and discursive posture of the rabbis as itself worthy of study in the case of rabbinic discourse on execution, see Berkowitz, *Execution and Invention*, 3–24, who shifts from a recovery of rabbinic execution to a study of rabbinic execution discourse as a means, expression, and construction of rabbinic identity and authority.

One of the things that happens when probing the rabbinic corpus through a topical prism is that quantitative disparities surface. In other words, some topics elicit unbalanced amounts of related material in the Tannaitic and Amoraic or Palestinian and Babylonian corpora and it is not always clear as to how to interpret this quantitative difference.³³ Focusing on specific topics can also make certain cultural differences visible, especially if enough parallel Babylonian and Palestinian pericopes emerge.³⁴ For example, I found that instances of looking at idols or looking at sages were more abundant in Palestinian writings, whereas sources on visual eros tilted more in the direction of Babylonia. I have not emerged with a globalizing theory of how to account for all such differences but try instead to explain them on a case-by-case level, finding different plausible explanatory factors in each instance.³⁵

In this study, I largely focus on the Yerushalmi, Palestinian Amoraic midrashim, and the Bavli. While acknowledging the difficulties in reading rabbinic texts, I attempt to be sensitive to the literary contexts in which particular sources are found. I situate each tradition primarily within the corpus in which it is found, but I also take note of patterns of attribution and parallels.³⁶ That is, I analyze passages as a whole within their literary corpus. So, when looking at a passage in the Babylonian Talmud, I situate

³³ Questions arise as to how to understand such discrepancies: are they due to the mere randomness and chance of what was transmitted or preserved, or can we posit a deafening argument from silence (when a topic is absent in one or another body of writing) related to geo-cultural differences or to internal hermeneutic differences or combinations of all of the aforementioned?

³⁴ There is also the question of how to attend to differences within a corpus. Scholars such as Richard Kalmin and Michael Satlow have found patterns of difference between Palestine and Babylonia not only between the corpora of the Palestinian Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud, but also within the Babylonian Talmud itself (looking at traditions attributed to Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis) and have presented convincing studies in which certain issues, e.g. idolatry or marriage, manifest differences along geographic lines, which are then explained in terms of local factors. See most recently, Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*, and Satlow, *Jewish Marriage*. However, the data I examined did not present patterns displaying this kind of consistency or allow for a totalizing argument across different realms of visibility in terms of consistent differences between Palestine and Babylonia. For an argument about the peculiar Babylonian attitude toward shame, see Rubenstein, *Culture*. For a tempering of this argument in the light of Palestinian evidence, see Seth Schwartz, *Mediterranean Society?*, 150–51.

³⁵ For example, Chapters 2 and 3 show more radical engagements with divine pilgrimage visibility in the Bavli than in the Yerushalmi; Chapter 5 shows a more complex engagement with the viewing of idols in Palestinian sources. I consider various factors in explaining these variations.

³⁶ I follow indications such as switches in language, technical terminology, and attributions while checking parallels and variants on a case-by-case basis. Whether a pericope, or sources within it, should primarily be viewed as Stammaic or (late) Amoraic is not my primary focus. If I cannot say for certain, I at the very least try to investigate differences between Palestinian and Babylonian sources. I am not taking a stand by way of a global theory on the vexed question of the chronology of the anonymous editorial layer of the Bavli or the heaviness of the editorial hand at work. Despite the importance of this issue in Talmudic scholarship, I was not able to come up with a consistent

the various strata (Tannaitic, Amoraic, anonymous editorial) within the governing logic of the passage as a whole, while noting patterns in the reuse of particular units that can be traced to Palestinian or earlier materials. The difficulties presented by these texts, and the sensitivity to their strata, require close textual work, which can nonetheless be put in the service of cultural history.

The Plan of the Book

This is not an exhaustive treatment of ancient Jewish, or even rabbinic, visuality. I have selected four interrelated and signal nodes in rabbinic sources through which the visual runs. These are: God, the erotic, idols, and the rabbinic sage. Let me explain something of the logic of this selection and segregation of topics that are, in fact, treacherously interrelated.

I set the scene with a brief overview of the study of vision and the multitude of ancient and late-antique ideas about the mechanics of the eye in Chapter 1, "Visual theory." We then begin our story with God, in Chapters 2 and 3, in the thick of ostensibly abstract rabbinic speculation and technical biblical and legal exegeses about a bygone pilgrimage ritual. We start here because, although the rabbis were not systematic theologians in the style of pagan philosophers or some of the church fathers, in a fundamental sense God was the sponsor of the rabbinic project, and divinity was an important concern for the rabbis and mobilized the rabbinic imagination.³⁷ Perhaps even more importantly, I tackle God first precisely because of the peculiar historicizing effect that God's visibility (or lack thereof) enjoyed in rabbinic eyes.³⁸ The rabbinic understanding of the post-temple period needs to be thought of, in some sense, as a crisis of visuality. Simply put, the rabbis' stories and ideas about God's visibility not only turned the sight of God into an increasing object of desire, but also became a way to construct a halcyon temple past in which direct visual access was granted; a future or afterlife in which this would be the case once more; and a present marked by nostalgia and desire for what was not. To acknowledge the centrality of seeing God for the rabbis, and to understand the particular forms it took, complicates both late-antique and contemporary historiography

or definitive conclusion as to such trends within the sampling of passages analyzed here (including the relatively few passages discussed that do come from the anonymous, presumably later, stratum).

³⁷ Cf. Biale, *Not in the Heavens*, 18.

³⁸ I use the term "historicizing" loosely to connote the designating of an "event" that has a temporalizing effect, by not only constructing a "before" and an "after" the "event" itself but also by continuing to signify as such in the construction of the ongoing present.

about the peculiar (lack of) visibility of the Jewish God, thus removing that impediment to a full consideration of Jewish visuality.³⁹

I show in Chapters 2 and 3 that the rabbis, particularly in Babylonia, believed in God's visibility and visualized God in reciprocal, graphic, and sometimes heavily eroticized and gendered terms, especially in later generations, despite our often misguided notions about what they should or should not have thought, given the second commandment. At the same time, I demonstrate that the rabbis, particularly in Palestine, did have anxieties that their fantasies might be idolatrous and expressed these anxieties in ways that allude to their awareness of how their God's visibility (or lack thereof) was perceived by non-Jews, Christians, and others.

Going from the ostensibly abstract and theological to the bodily, Chapter 4, "Visual eros," takes up the discussion of eroticism begun in Chapter 3. Just as visions of God triggered anxieties about sexuality and idolatry, so too did the rabbis construct a visual opposition, in certain circumstances, between the erotic and the sacred in the field of vision. Even if looking at the divine was dangerous, it was laudatory in ways that looking at sexually arousing entities was not. Yet, it quickly becomes apparent that the rabbis thought in highly gendered terms about seeing sexually. Rabbinic ideas about visual erotics, particularly in the context of prohibition and visual asceticism, presume a basic binary: a gendered distribution of visual labor, with a masculine, penetrative gaze and a feminine visual object. The anxieties triggered by the sexual gaze and the possible solution of male visual asceticism had curious consequences. Withdrawing from the world of visual eros turns unseeing rabbis into visual objects desired by women, by other rabbis, and by gentile men and women, troubling a simple division of visual erotic labor. Amidst these sexual dramas, we see that just as the visualization of God was shaped by the politics of a post-temple world and life under the Roman Christian imperium, so too did their cultural and political circumstances impact the rabbis' sense of their own visible desirability.

Chapter 5 takes seriously the ways in which rabbis dealt with the sight of the gods of others. Especially in their anthropomorphized forms, these were false images, in that they made false claims about their own truth as representations. In the words of Psalms 135, "They have mouths but do not speak; they have eyes but do not see; they have ears but do not hear."⁴⁰ What is curious is that in their various strategies of how to look (or not to

³⁹ This persists both in modern Jewish accounts of vision (such as those by Levinas and Derrida) and in accounts *about* modern Jewish visuality (e.g. by Martin Jay).

⁴⁰ Psalms 135:16–17.

look) at idols, the rabbis seem to have been conversant in modes of sacred viewing common in the late-antique Near East and Mediterranean. Not only this, but the rabbis contrast displays of disrespect toward idols with appropriate pieties toward their own persons, producing a sense of their own persons as objects of sacred visuality.

Chapter 6, “Seeing sages,” is the mirror image of Chapter 5. Unlike Chapters 3 and 4, which focus on the productive powers of prohibition in the visual field, Chapter 6 joins Chapters 2 and 3 in making the case for a positive rabbinic visuality, in this case through the creation of rabbinic “icons.” If direct access to the sight of God’s face and a reciprocal vision of the deity was lost, how was the sacred visible in the here and now? Both surprisingly and unsurprisingly, the rabbis invited this searching gaze to behold their own persons. Perhaps it is not surprising that the quest for beholding the divine face should come full circle and end in viewing the face of the rabbi, but what might be surprising is the degree to which rabbis invested the face of the sage not only with ritual but with pedagogic, scholastic, and mnemonic power. That is, seeing the radiant face of the sage was bound up with the transmission of Torah knowledge itself.

Across all of our investigations, we see both the perils and the promises of sight, the anxiety about doing the right thing for the sake of the community and the self, and the rabbis’ ultimate desire to reproduce themselves, and thus preserve the rabbinic project.

CHAPTER ONE

Visual theory

“I want a history of looking.”

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*¹

What does it mean to study the sensory history of the past, and, relatedly, what does it mean to write about the senses? Rather than approaching these twin problems as a quest for the recovery or replication of an original or foundational rabbinic sensory experience, I want to attend to the problems involved in studying and writing about the senses in general and specifically about the sense of vision. The mediations between the evidence of late antiquity and my reading in the present, between seeing and writing, are manifold, and in my work here I wish not only to acknowledge these mediations but also to explore and exploit the tensions between them.

One approach to a cultural history of rabbinic vision is to consider material things that rabbis, among others in the late-antique Mediterranean and Near East, saw. However, I am less interested in *what* they saw and far more in *how* they saw.² As in Barthes’ formulation, this is less a history of visual objects and more a history of viewing. When we expand the question to ask *how* people saw, we broaden the range of things that come into view, not all of which are manifestly material (at least in our terms). In this study, objects of vision include not just material objects but the messy

¹ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 12.

² The question of “what people saw” is a valuable and important one, but it is not the subject of this book. As I hope to explain below, I do not see a necessary link between vision and images; in fact, I believe that there is an all too quick confusion between the two on both evidentiary and analytic levels. The important work of both Marc Bregman and Annabel Wharton on visibility does not distinguish between the sense of vision and differing kinds of “visual” representation (text and image), using “visual” interchangeably for both (Bregman, “Seeing with the sages”; Wharton, “Good and bad images”). Wharton argues that scholars, in looking to the Bible to understand the meaning of the paintings at Dura Europos, have effectively effaced the image by identifying “the text – not the image – as the locus of meaning.” She describes this in terms of “another form of resistance to the pressure exerted by the paintings of the synagogue to revise stereotypes of Semitic non-visibility.”

realms of God, piety, sanctity, humanity, gender, sexuality, and knowledge. These are but a few of the sights that were important to the rabbis' sense of themselves. I find these visual objects, and learn about how they are seen, by reading rabbinic literature.

Moving from the material to the textual and to the visual, I must clarify why I do not privilege the so-called visual evidence. "Visual evidence" is often used to refer to "images" or "art"; in other words, to things like paintings, statues, reliefs, and mosaics.³ There is a logical difference, however, between sight (the verb, the experience, the action, the sense) and those very specific entities (amidst the very wide field of possible objects of vision) that we like to call "images." To put it another way, one can see a great many sights without ever looking at, let alone making, a painting, sculpture, or mosaic.⁴ Conversely, images offer more than just visual data to our perceptual apparatus.⁵

The ready association between vision and the carefully crafted artifacts, especially images, that we now categorize as art is indebted to certain traditions in philosophy and history of art. Ancient Greek philosophers strongly associated the sense of sight and images with thought itself.⁶ Art historians have been especially attentive to vision's role in the making and meaning of images. However, as scholars such as W. J. T. Mitchell have pointed out, the fact that vision is one way in which to think about images does not mean that images are *the* quintessential visual object with which to think about seeing.⁷ In this study, therefore, I use the word "visual" to refer to a sensory modality. A visual object, artifact, or piece of evidence simply

³ On the distinction between "images" and what came to be understood as "art," see Belting, *Likeness and Presence*; Smith, "Visual history and ancient history," 59–67. The latter also calls attention to the related problems with focusing on "art" or "images" apart from the broader material history of antiquity.

⁴ And even the relationship between vision and representation is not necessarily transparent. That is, there is not necessarily a one-to-one relation between the artist's vision and/or the ancient viewer's perception of the painting and our contemporary views of it. Rogers, "Truth and meaning," argues against a realist theory of picture perception ("veridicality"). For a non-correspondence approach to art viewing, see Bryson, "Semiology and visual interpretation"; Davis, *Theory of Visual Culture*.

⁵ For analyses that emphasize the multi-sensory, ritual, architectural, temporal, and dynamic lives of art, see Fine, "Art and the liturgical context," 229–30; Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 189; Pentcheva, *Sensual Icon*.

⁶ Aristotle famously declared that we cannot think without images (Aristotle, *De Memoria* 449b31–450a1, *De Anima* 427b14). This capacity, related to his notion of *phantasia* (and memory), is "the precondition of human thought and consciousness" (Schlutz, *Mind's World*, 17). For Plato, thought rises above images, even as vision was crucial to his entire philosophical enterprise. For a discussion of the place of vision in Plato's thought that attends to his theory of sight, see Pesic, "Seeing the forms." For the use of mental images in Plotinus, see Plotinus, *Enneads* IV.3, 30; V.5–6, 8, 11, 19, and Cocking, *Imagination*, 1–89. On the differences between Aristotle's and Plotinus's use of images, see Blumenthal, "Plotinus' adaptation."

⁷ Mitchell, "Showing seeing."

means something that is perceived visually; it does not refer narrowly to pictorial representation or to an artistic artifact, although it could include these.⁸

Related to the above argument, an object's form of representation as conventionally understood (e.g. text, image) does not necessarily mirror or exhaust the modes of its perception.⁹ Just as images or the built environment operate in the realms of touch, space, proprioception, scent, and sound, so too do written words point to more than just the realms of textuality, verbality, orality, or language.¹⁰ They tell us about more than their own representational form.¹¹ The mode or *form* of representation ought not be limited to or confused with the various depths and types of *content(s)* or *media* that it represents and contains.¹² It is vision's conceptual

⁸ What we tend to refer to as "visual culture," even when applied more broadly to include things outside of "fine art" (i.e. what is often called "popular visual culture") are nonetheless in the realm of depiction and pictorial representation. One can imagine a similar state in the study of "auditory culture" where, even if the objects under discussion go beyond "music" to sounds like sirens and bells, nonetheless, qualities of voice or phenomena like coughs and shrieks may not receive the same analytical treatment. I do not use the terms "verbal" or "textual" evidence and "visual" evidence to refer to "texts" and "images." I prefer to mark the different modes of representation inherent in texts and images by referring to the textual/verbal and the pictorial, respectively, to avoid confusion.

⁹ Furthermore, forms of representation (say, the textual and the pictorial) do not exhaust the modes of their perception. Just as a sculpture is perceived by more than just the eyes, so too a text is perceived by more than the neurocognitive process known as "reading." A text is, after all, first of all *seen*, often touched, moved, manipulated, sounded, and embodied in various ways. Artifacts can be synaesthetically perceived: so, we can *see* a text, which is *silent*, and yet which, through careful analysis, can *talk* to us about orality, textuality, and language. Webb Keane describes the historicity of materiality and religious practices (for a somewhat different purpose) in a lyrical way that also speaks to the multi-sensory vicissitudes of both: "The history of any set of cultural practices is in part a matter of accretion and of stripping away. To revelation is added commentary. Liturgies produce architectures; both require officers. Oral testimony comes to be inscribed; written texts can be kissed, enshrouded, worn about the neck as a talisman, rendered into ashes to be swallowed, inscribed as unreadable but gorgeous calligraphy, appreciated for their literary beauty" (Keane, "Evidence," 124). On smell and textuality, see Rindisbacher, *Smell of Books*.

¹⁰ The work of film theorists such as Marks, *Skin of the Film*; Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*; and Barker, *Tactile Eye*, has helped undo the narrower understanding not only of "visual artifacts" but also of vision itself as it is intertwined with touch and the body. This is another important facet of vision that bypasses the polemical ocularcentric critique. For a nuanced appraisal and assessment of visual culture and criticisms of ocularcentrism, see Cook, "Seeing the visual." This article makes the move of identifying visual artifacts with, or as primary evidence for, the visual sense.

¹¹ Cognitive linguists such as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson point to the way language reflects vision as an example of how cognitive systems are interconnected, given their claim that language is primarily derived from embodiment (Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, esp. 541–48). What is perhaps unhelpful for our inquiry is the modernist way in which they focus on the "understanding is seeing metaphor."

¹² We should add that form can also include the very materiality of text. Approaches like book history get at the multi-sensory, multi-dimensional aspects of things like text. At the same time, it is true that pictorial images can thematize vision and, even more self-referentially, can thematize their own viewing. Magritte's painting/text "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" playfully breaks down this possibility and makes a (visual, textual, verbal, material, pictorial) argument about the lack of direct match

colonization by the image and the consequent fixation on images (narrowly defined) as objects of vision that has helped lead to the erroneous perception that Jewish culture is lacking in a visual sensibility.

My path, then, to investigating rabbinic visibility is through rabbinic texts. These sources present us with their own problems and difficulties qua texts. But we may also ask how we can excavate vision from words, visibility from textuality. Leora Auslander puts the problem as follows: How can we get to the sensorium via words, when it is in fact “beyond words”?¹³ She argues that because sensation is “beyond words,” we ought to prefer objects as sources as they too communicate wordlessly, and in a more direct and embodied way.¹⁴ The route suggested by Auslander requires a degree of faith in objects to hold and transmit meaning through time; under this model, they become vessels or repositories of sensory history. This, in turn, requires faith in our perceptual abilities. It is true that objects themselves mediate and structure the sensory, and require us to have keen eyes, ears, noses, and hands in order not only to perceive them but also to understand how they work and frame our perception. I remain, however, uncertain that their lack of language per se makes material objects deserving of greater attention than texts, at least for a history of the human senses.¹⁵ I am both less pessimistic about language and less optimistic about the possibility of a more direct, wordless access to past sensory culture and experience.¹⁶ At any rate, scholars tend to feel compelled to communicate about the material and the sensory using language.¹⁷ Moreover, those who study smell or sound do not have recourse to seventeenth-century recordings of urban decibels or olfactory access to late-antique catacombs, with their stench of rotting corpses mixed with heavy incense. I do not want to suggest a

between the form of evidence or representation (say material, textual, sonic) and the topic or sense under interrogation.

¹³ Auslander, “Beyond words.” See also Auslander, “Jewish taste?” Cf. Thomas, “The evidence of sight.”

¹⁴ I do not accept this somewhat Platonizing understanding of the presence of things versus words.

¹⁵ This is not to discount their evidentiary value, especially because objects can give us evidence about those who are not represented in textual sources. Even so, objects, just like textual data, do not speak for themselves. We cannot assume a one-to-one correspondence between our perception of an object and its past perception.

¹⁶ This is not to deny the possibility of their use, nor is it to deny the validity of studies that take objects, rather than humans, as their focus. On the latter, see Hoskins, “Agency, biography and objects.” Furthermore, I do not deny that words or texts of necessity allow access to only some, not all humans. I also maintain, like others, that one can read texts against the grain, not to recover silent (or silenced) voices, but rather to hypothesize or conceive of other possibilities. On this approach towards rabbinic texts, see Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 9.

¹⁷ Although those such as Timothy Ingold are moving beyond such confines, as in Ingold’s current project on “Making” which explores the interfaces between anthropology, art, and practice.

split between “the real” and “unmediated” sight, sound, or smell and its cultural overlay or representation, but words – precisely because of their mediation – do a wonderful job of helping us understand how the sensory made “sense” to people.

Late-antique people living in Rome, Syria, and Palestine were also generally optimistic (or pragmatic) about the possibility of using words and language to (re)create vision. *Ekphrasis*, the ancient art of bringing events, artifacts, and personalities to the “mind’s eye” through words, was, in its various incarnations and expressions, also a theory about how language was intertwined with, and could invoke, vision and other senses and sensations.¹⁸ I, too, while acknowledging the limits of language, will embrace its imperfect imbrication in the sensory and the historical and will use it to convey my analyses of late-antique rabbinic culture, as all historians must, despite the various gaps that obtrude between present and past.

This brings us back to the earlier suggestion that, in reading rabbinic sources (among others), my aim is to answer the question of how vision functioned, not to capture some original, actual experience of seeing. It is on this basis, then, that I argue for the significance of the visual for the formation of a particular kind of (rabbinic) self. If rabbinic and other texts mediate and thereby structure vision itself, it is precisely these mediations and structures that I seek to surface in my analysis.

A word about how I have sought the visual in rabbinic texts. I have sought to follow linguistic markings and cues as much as possible, and so I have tended toward a somewhat narrow classification of the visual in linguistic terms. This means I look at verbal, nominal, and adjectival indicators, particularly in situations in which vision is thematized and the usage is substantive rather than incidental.¹⁹ Sometimes, seeing can simply

¹⁸ *Ekphrasis* was not limited to the depiction of “images” narrowly speaking. For a recent study of ancient *ekphrasis* through to the sixth century see Webb, *Ekphrasis*. Webb shows *ekphrasis* was a rhetorical technique designed to enable the audience/reader to experience visuality and so to spark “mental images of the subjects it ‘placed before the eyes’,” (Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 193). *Ekphrasis* presumed a theory of representation, invoking even if not transparently mirroring something. Martin Jay notes: “The embedded sensual metaphors in language alerted us to the importance of material and sensual vehicles for conveying meaning, and opened up questions of the translatability – or lack thereof – between conventional spoken and written languages and the ‘languages’ of images, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches” (Jay, “In the realm of the senses”). David Howes points out that the inability of textual representation to straightforwardly convey any of the sensory perceptions can actually be an advantage, because it does not privilege any of the senses and more clearly delineates the information being perceived as filtered (Howes, *Sensual Relations*, 57). Paul Stoller also finds that textual representations, specifically narrative ethnography, have advantages over film for reasons similar to Howes’ (Stoller, *Taste of Ethnographic Things*, 154).

¹⁹ Examples of this include autopsy (*opsis*, “sight”) as used as a basis for historical knowledge by those such as Herodotus, and as featured in the “tall tales” told by Rabbah b. bar Ḥannah in *b. Bava Batra*

denote co-presence; at other times its perceptual and optical specificity is key. Thus the series of blessings to be uttered upon seeing various visual objects in *m. Berakhot* and *t. Berakhot* (discussed in the Introduction) are a clear instance in which vision is framed and thematized linguistically, liturgically, and conceptually.²⁰ I try not to apply visual-analytical terms like “gaze,” or “point of view,” or “perspective” unless the sources mark seeing *as such*.²¹ For example, I refrain from talking about the “rabbinic gaze” or the “imperial gaze” in broader, metaphoric, or metonymic terms; even though I understand the analytic purchase of such more expansive usages, these would unnecessarily obscure the specificity of my inquiry.²² So too, mere mention of images, or even florid descriptions, do not suffice to be considered meditations on sight without further literary or linguistic markers.²³

73b–74a, who constantly reiterates that “I myself saw.” On Herodotus and autopsy, see Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus*, 260–305. On autopsy in rabbinic sources, see Stein, “Believing is seeing,” and Boustán, “Spoils.”

²⁰ I refrain from using terms like “image,” “imagery,” or “pictorial” in a literary-critical sense that is metaphorical.

²¹ See Gérard Genette’s response to Mieke Bal’s critique of his notions of focalization and, moreover, his (correct, to my mind.) distinction between *focalization* and *ocularization* in terms of differences between novelist and filmmaker and the latter’s camera. Focalization, as used by literary critics such as Genette, refers to knowledges implied or attributed to narrators or readers of novels (Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 72–76; Bal, “Narration and focalization”; Jost, “Narration(s),” 205). Bal defines focalization as “the relation between the subject and object of perception” (Bal, *Travelling Concepts*, 41). Although used to analyze texts and film (including narrowly visual matters), “focalization,” along with other narratological concepts such as mimesis, diegesis, gaze, look, point of view, perspective, and image, is not necessarily strictly about sight per se (Bal, *Travelling Concepts*, 14, “the non-coincidence between the narratological concept of focalization and the visual studies’ concepts of gaze and look,” 15, “tensions between visibility and textuality,” 35–39, 56–95). Bal stresses focalization’s visibility (Bal, *Narratology*, 161), while Genette has sought to separate it out (Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 189, and *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 64). For similarly careful analyses of how “focalization’s connection to seeing is merely metonymical or metaphorical,” see Jahn, “Windows of focalization,” 243. See also Horstkotte, “Seeing or speaking,” 171–72; Jesch and Stein, “Perspectivization and focalization.”

²² Gwynn Kessler uses notions of vision, seeing, (fetal) “imaging,” and the “rabbinic gaze,” but in the broader metaphorical, epistemological sense rather than in a sense that concerns vision per se (Kessler, *Conceiving Israel*, 15–22, 24). Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 71–77, treats the gaze in the context of Roman imperialism, notions of public and private, and the male gaze, all important features of the narrative he discusses, but again he does not thematize vision as such. I cite these examples simply to contrast and clarify the specificity with which I focus on rabbinic language and use visual analysis for this particular study. I recognize the value in less restrictive kinds of analysis for other purposes. Examples closer to the way I study vision and deploy visual analysis are the work of Georgia Frank, *Memory*, which attends to the thematization of vision in pilgrims’ accounts and hagiography; Jacobs, *Remains*, 124–30, where he looks to the sensory pleasure and aestheticization of Jews in the Piacenza pilgrim’s account as part of his analysis of the Roman-Christian imperial gaze.

²³ I prefer to treat those graphic or colorful descriptions that explicitly mention eyes or sight, rather than those that assume it implicitly. Borderline cases, however, are those in which vision as such is not mentioned but in which aesthetic pleasure is: e.g. terms like “beautiful” (*yafe*) or “fine” (*na’eh*). A good example of this might be the description of Sarai’s beauty in the *Genesis Apocryphon*, which

Before moving to some of the ideas about vision that were current in the late-antique world, I wish to address two additional issues related to the study of vision. The first relates to critiques about the over-privileging of the sense of sight, and the second pertains to the science of vision, as opposed to its humanistic study.

Many have argued that we over-privilege the sense of vision, both as an object of scholarly analysis and as the sense that historically underpins Western, modern(ist), post-Enlightenment, rationalist, scientific cultures. Vision and its manifestations, these critiques argue, fund state- (and other-) sponsored voyeuristic and (potentially) oppressive, sometimes colonial modes of thinking, knowing, and acting.²⁴ They have also rightly pointed to the enumeration and segregation of the senses and their hierarchy as historically and culturally variable and therefore recommend a more integrative model for their study.²⁵ Such critiques also find company with feminist and gender critiques of vision as bound up with coercion, power, and oppression.²⁶

These important critiques bring to light some of the troubling ways in which vision has operated conceptually and materially. Certainly, one aspect of the exclusion of certain groups (such as Jews) from the grand visual narrative has been, as we argued in the Introduction, part of racial and racist (and in the Jewish case, Christian-funded anti-Semitic) understandings about who is capable of and who deserves sight. At the same time, it is noteworthy that many critiques of vision, though not all, fixate on the advent of the Enlightenment and modernity as singular turning points for vision's intellectualization and consequent political, scientific, epistemic, and aesthetic status. In the desire to question and historicize the hegemony of vision, there is a tendency to fixate upon it in overly modernist, Western-centric terms.

The rabbis, who are far from modern and who cross boundaries of East and West, allow us another way into the problem of visual privilege, one that defies such easy periodization and characterization. Furthermore, as

runs through the various aspects of Sarai's body with constant exclamations of "how beautiful," "how fine," "how lovely," etc.

²⁴ This has also been the argument of many scholars of vision themselves, e.g. in Levin (ed.), *Modernity*.

²⁵ Though, see James Cook's careful consideration of such critiques and their problems (Cook, "Seeing the visual"). Cook notes the way these critiques ignore the visual intervention of minority or oppressed groups.

²⁶ Both on the philosophical level, e.g. Irigaray, *Sex*, and also as per Mulvey, "Visual pleasure", who, as we will see in Chapter 4, understands the gaze as male. For a critique of vision's hegemony in the modern West in the realm of art, aesthetics, and politics that nonetheless recognizes how touch is "the silent partner of vision . . . even as it is ideologically disavowed," see Walden, "Vision," 119. For a nuanced discussion of such critiques of the eye, see Haraway, "Persistence."

we will see throughout the book, rabbis and other late-antique people did not cordon off vision from other senses in the manner of certain Enlightenment thinkers, though they definitely did conceive of sight as a sense as such, with a certain, if porous, integrity. Sight, according to the rabbis and others, was intertwined with the sense of touch and it was sometimes characterized as digestive or sexual.²⁷ Furthermore, far from the cerebral, disembodied, and objective sight of thinkers such as Descartes, the relationship between seeing subject and visual object was uncertain and reversible. Vision was thus as much in need of control as it was an instrument of control. Certainly, we do find imperial, colonial, gendered, racialized deployments of vision in ancient sources, but these sources also open up a bevy of other possibilities for conceiving of vision that go far beyond a disembodied, rationalizing, subjugating gaze.²⁸ Such pathways into vision's history are helpful for historicizing our own critiques of vision's ills, as well as for opening up the equally variegated modes of seeing in the modern period and present moment.

I now address the second important issue, the science of vision. Some scholars prefer to distinguish between the scientific and medical accounts of vision and cultural accounts thereof, by using the term "vision" for the former and "visuality" for the latter.²⁹ Histories of science and studies in the neurocognition and psychology of vision, however, call such hard-and-fast distinctions into question. I use the term *visuality* in its broadest sense to describe ways of being visual and do not distinguish between *visuality* as the "discursive formation" and the "datum of vision."³⁰ As

²⁷ B. Yoma 74b.

²⁸ In the field of anthropology, see Ingold's reassessment of vision, which is at once abstract and profound. Following his critique of Jay, on the basis that the latter is overly invested in reducing vision entirely to the realm of discourse, Ingold instead advocates the detailed empirical consideration of actual practices of looking (Ingold, *Perception*). For resistant visualities see Elsner, "Pausanias"; Goldhill, "Erotic eye"; Russell, "Aemilius Paullus."

²⁹ Thus, Frank, *Memory*, 103; Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 9; Silver, "Review of Robert S. Nelson, *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*." Jay uses these terms to distinguish between physiological vision and cultural *visuality* even as he argues for a porous boundary between them. Used as distinctions, "vision" and "visuality" could be said to be analogous to Foucault's early distinction between "sex" as the "pre-given datum" and "sexuality" as a "simultaneously discursive and institutional formation which came to graft itself on to sex, to overlay it and perhaps finally to obscure it" (Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 210). Later, Foucault argued that sex was in fact "produced by the apparatus of sexuality," and we might apply this reversal to vision and *visuality*, as well.

³⁰ Therefore, I do not employ the terms "vision" and "visuality" to differentiate between a physiological account and a cultural account of vision. The term *visuality* gained wide currency, especially in the early to mid-nineties after the edited volume Foster (ed.), *Vision and Visuality*. Foster is careful to state that by using the separate terms "vision" and "visuality" he does not mean to inscribe an opposition of nature versus culture, as each includes both. As he puts it, "The vision between the terms signals a difference within the visual – between the mechanisms of sight and its historical

Chris Otter puts it, “the rather ugly word *visuality* . . . captures the simultaneously physiological, practical, discursive, and technospatial nature of vision.”³¹

One of the striking things about the scientific study of vision – despite the huge advances in understanding how the retina converts light rays into electrical signals and sends them to the visual cortex through the optic nerve – is how little agreement there is on how the brain then processes the visual information from the eyes and converts it into sight.³² The human eye is actually a relatively clumsy mechanism. There is a significant gap between the small amount of visual data supplied via the eye and the process that makes sense of this information in the brain. We still do not fully understand how this gap between raw data and final outcome is bridged. In other words, much of what we call “seeing” goes on in the brain rather than in the eye; what makes sight meaningful or sensible is largely in our heads.

Scientific accounts of vision thus tend not to follow a correspondence theory of representation: the brain does not simply represent the visual world but actively constructs the things that the eye perceives.³³ Natural scientists and social scientists, including linguistic and cognitive anthropologists, have consequently tried to generate models of seeing that account for different cultural, environmental, and other factors involved in this process, since so much of what constitutes visual perception is a function of prior information that the brain supplies and combines, which is as much cultural as it is developmental. Studies have shown that people of different cultural backgrounds perceive in radically different ways, upholding “the proposition that culture affects perception at a deep level.”³⁴

techniques, between the datum of vision and its discursive determinations – a difference, among many differences, among how we see, how we are able, allowed or made to see, and how we see this seeing or unseeing therein” (Foster (ed.), *Vision and Visuality*, ix). I find it unnecessary to posit such a differentiation between the two terms. Certainly, if one looks at the ancient and late-ancient world, it can be hard to separate the “scientific” understandings of sight and its mechanisms (“vision”) from its cultural significations (“visuality”), and it seems unnecessarily anachronistic to approach things this way. See Karen Bassi’s succinct critique of Foster’s version of this split between the “datum of vision and its discursive formations,” (Bassi, “Things of the past”).

³¹ Otter, *Victorian Eye*, 24–25.

³² The scientific literature on vision is enormous. For some good, basic introductions, see Hubel, *Eye, Brain, and Vision*; Hubel and Wiesel, *Brain and Visual Perception*; Wade and Swanson, *Visual Perception*; Gordon, *Theories of Visual Perception*.

³³ This is also arguably the case for pictorial representation in images; Rogers, “Truth and meaning,” argues against a realist theory of picture perception (“veridicality”).

³⁴ Nisbett and Norenzayan, “Culture and cognition,” 18; Iwao and Gentner, “Cross-linguistic.” On the historical division between and emerging congruence of “natural” and “social” scientific studies of vision, see Adams et al. (eds.), *Science of Social Vision*.

Late-Antique Visual Theory

In the world of late antiquity, as in today's, the mechanics of vision were contested, manipulated, and enacted in a variety of domains. These ranged across mathematics, optics, ophthalmology, medicine, magic, ritual, architecture, literature, and drama. The rabbinic sources at the heart of my analysis originate in late-antique Roman Palestine and Persian Babylonia. Therefore, I wish to briefly "set the scene" of late-antique visuality. The overview I give will necessarily be synthetic and selective of the vast spectrum of late-antique evidence and scholarship.³⁵ It will also be weighted toward the Greco-Roman, an outcome of the relative wealth of evidence and scholarship currently available.

It is by now a commonplace that late-antique Greco-Roman culture was heir to a long-lived and still lively literary, philosophical, and theatrical tradition of the visual.³⁶ The early Roman empire has been dubbed a "visually voracious and violent world in which there was a heightened, sometimes paranoid, awareness of the pleasures and dangers of spectatorial relations."³⁷ Certainly, Christian apologists and church fathers characterize "pagan" entertainments, fashions, and lifestyles in this light.³⁸ This rather antagonistic tone shifts as the Roman and the Christian become implicated politically, and hence, as spectacle itself becomes Christianized. Vision, nevertheless, remains a tempestuous topic.³⁹ Such shifts had an impact on rabbis living in Palestine under Roman rule, and, as we shall see in Chapter 3, these concerns were also formulated in rabbinic Mesopotamia.

The late-antique world was awash in various theories about the mechanics of vision: Stoic, Platonic, Aristotelian, Atomistic, and variously constituted hybrids of the foregoing. We begin with the basic elements of the essential theories of vision elaborated by philosophers and physicians from

³⁵ This overview is indebted to Frank, *Memory*; Morales, *Vision and Narrative*; Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*.

³⁶ This has been variously described as ocularcentric or scopophilic. See Morales, *Vision and Narrative*, 9–10; Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals*; Frontisi-Ducroux, "Eros, desire and the gaze"; Price, *Rituals and Power*; McCormack, *Art and Ceremony*; Feldherr, *Spectacle and Society*.

³⁷ Morales, *Vision and Narrative*, 14.

³⁸ On Clement and Tertullian, see Goldhill, "Erotic eye," who shows that this ranges in time, from the second-century figures such as Clement and Tertullian to later figures such as Augustine and John Chrysostom. See Elsner, "Origins."

³⁹ E.g. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*.

ancient Greece through the later Roman empire.⁴⁰ Vision was generally understood to be intromissive (effected by something entering the eye), extramissive (effected by something coming out of the eye), or a combination of both. As Galen put it:

A body that is seen does one of two things: either it sends something from itself to us and thereby gives an indication of its peculiar character, or if it does not itself send something, it waits for some sensory power to come to it from us.⁴¹

Variations of the intromissive visual theory can be found among the atomists (fifth to fourth century BCE) and Aristotle (mid to late fourth century BCE). The atomists believed that vision is effected by material *eidōla*, or effluvia being conveyed from physical objects to the eye.⁴² For Aristotle, vision is also mediated, but his theory is far less physiological. Sight is enabled by a transparent medium such as air or water, which, together with light, allowed color (key to Aristotle's theory of vision) to be conveyed through the (primarily liquid) eye into its interior. Ultimately, the sense organ acted upon was the soul. Aristotelian ideas figure in the writings of the Aristotelian commentators of late antiquity, even if filtered through the prism of neoplatonic thought.⁴³

Plato (fifth century BCE), whose extramissive understanding of vision also continued to have great currency in late antiquity, held that when there is light, a "visual current" issues from the eye, coalesces with the light, and strikes the object of vision.⁴⁴ The object in turn emanates particles and ultimately that "data" is transmitted to the soul.⁴⁵ Like Plato, Stoic philosophers (Stoicism was founded by Zeno of Citium, 335–265 BCE and influential for centuries) held that vision is a combination of light and visual currents emitted from the eye. Rays emitted by the eye interact with the

⁴⁰ Claggett, *Greek Science*, 78, distinguishes between optics (the geometry of light rays) and theories of vision (whether and how the visual rays proceeded from eye to object, or the reverse, or both). Those such as Galen might be said to be concerned with the physiology of the eye as well as of vision (theories of vision) and those such as Ptolemy and Euclid focused on optics (including the mathematical rules of perspective and refraction).

⁴¹ Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, 7.5.1 (trans. de Lacy, *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, 453).

⁴² E.g., Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius.

⁴³ E.g. Porphyry (c. 234–305 CE) and Iamblichus (c. 242–325 CE) are known to have written commentaries. Alexander of Aphrodisias of the second century is an exception in this regard.

⁴⁴ Plato, *Timaeus* 45b–c.

⁴⁵ Ivan Illich called it "the fingering gaze" (Duden, Illich, and Jerome, "The scopic past").

illuminated air, forming a tensed field shaped like a cone. This “extension” of the eye touches the shapes of objects and transmits the information back to the eye. As Margaret Miles puts it, vision in this theory is a “two-way street.”⁴⁶ The highly influential Galen (129–200 CE) adopted and adapted elements of Stoic understandings of vision, together with the findings of the Alexandrian anatomists, such as Rufus of Ephesus.⁴⁷ He argued that visual power (*pneuma*) comes from the eye (and ultimately from the brain), combines with the air to “become for us the kind of instrument that the nerve in the body is at all times.”⁴⁸

All these variations of intromissive and extramissive theories assume an intertwining between vision and touch.⁴⁹ And these variations showed remarkable staying power, within the philosophical mix of the first centuries CE. Stoicism was a particularly vital philosophical tradition in late antiquity, informing the visual theories of persons from Galen to Augustine.⁵⁰ Helen Morales describes Stoicism as the “philosophical *koine*” of the late-antique world.⁵¹ At the same time, Platonic thought also persisted and flourished, particularly in the Near East.⁵²

The theories of vision outlined are not just the abstractions of an exclusive philosophical (and medical) elite, with no bearing on wider understandings of sight. In fact, evidence from the rarified to the more widespread, from medical writings, optics, mathematics, and philosophy to romances, magical materials, graffiti, and material artifacts, shows that a mix of these extramissive and intromissive ideas were abundant, not just in philosophical circles, but also in broader late-antique society.⁵³

⁴⁶ Miles, “Vision,” 128.

⁴⁷ Galenic science is supposed to have reached the Sasanian empire (Walker, *Mar Qardagh*, 180–85; Reinink, “Theology and medicine”).

⁴⁸ Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, 7.5.11 (trans. de Lacy, *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, 455). It is thus sentient rather than a mere transmitter of data. See Siegel, *Galen on Sense Perception*; Simon, *Le regard*. See also Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 21–24, on *pneuma* and Stoic theories of vision.

⁴⁹ Aristotle’s theory of vision may be the exception here.

⁵⁰ Miles, “Vision,” 125–42.

⁵¹ Morales, *Vision and Narrative*, 15.

⁵² E.g. Numenius, Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and the Christian Nemesius of Emesa. See Wallis, *Neoplatonism*; Smith, *Philosophy in Late Antiquity*; Remes, *Neoplatonism*. On Christian neoplatonists, see O’Meara, *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, and Blumenthal and Markus (eds.), *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*.

⁵³ The evidence of these two theories is ubiquitous and varied in nature, ranging from Ptolemy’s *Optica*, to Galen’s *De Usu Partium*, to Pliny’s *Naturalis Historia*, to Achilles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Clitophon*, to Vergil’s *Aeneid*, to many magical charms amulets and spells that invoke the eye (good or evil). Some of the enormous secondary literature on this includes Cheriness, “Galen”; Smith, *Ptolemy’s Theory of Visual Perception*.

We can see these optical theories at play in the ancient notion of love (or lust) at first sight:⁵⁴

Her face flashed on my eyes like lightning . . . As soon as I had seen her, I was lost. For Beauty's wound is sharper than any weapon's, and it runs through the eyes down to the soul. It is through the eye that love's wound passes . . .⁵⁵

In *Leucippe and Clitophon*, we find the face of the beloved "striking" the eyes of the lover. Clitophon also describes the tactile sensation of pain (sharper, wounds) caused by the object of vision. Thus, when eye "strikes" eye, the wound is especially painful:

So when Leucippe heard the doors opening (there was already a light inside), she raised her head a moment and then cast her eyes down again. Thersandros glimpsed her loveliness for a fleeting second, like a lightning flash (for beauty resides especially in the eyes), and his soul went out to her. He stood fixed by the sight, waiting for the moment when she would look up again to him. As she kept her head lowered, he said: "Why do you look downwards, woman? Why let the loveliness of your eyes spill onto the earth? Let it flow rather into these eyes of mine."⁵⁶

Here, a combination of extramissive and intromissive theories underpin what can effectively be considered ocular intercourse. It is precisely vision's adjacency to touch, and the slipperiness of vision, that allows it to stoke eros and desire in ancient eyes with such ease. Thus, biblical and ancient Mesopotamian protagonists often "see" women (or men) and desire them simultaneously.⁵⁷ So too, the Hellenistic-Jewish novel *Joseph and Aseneth* describes how Pharaoh's son, "saw them [Joseph and Aseneth] from the

⁵⁴ There is a circular logic here, or what might be called a "feedback loop": sight gives rise to desire, which gives rise to the desire for the sight itself. See Xenophon, *Symposium* 4:12: "For as it is, I would rather gaze at Cleinias than at all the other beautiful objects in the world. I would rather be blind to all things else than to Cleinias alone. I chafe at both night and sleep because then I do not see him; I feel the deepest gratitude to day and the sun because they reveal Cleinias to me" (trans. Marchant and Todd, 571). It should be noted that Socrates in Plato's *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* sounds a note of caution against those who, falling in love at sight, hasten to physical fulfillment rather than worship of the divine forms.

⁵⁵ Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 1.4.2–3 (trans. Winkler, 179): Clitophon on his first sighting of Leucippe. Morales highlights this "vocabulary of violence" (Morales, *Vision and Narrative*, 158.) See also *Leucippe and Clitophon* 5.13.4: "The pleasure of this vision slides through the eyes into the breast" (trans. Winkler, 239).

⁵⁶ *Leucippe and Clitophon* 6 (trans. Winkler, 252). See further, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 7, on the way in which beholding a beautiful person's tears stimulates tears which are ideally to be beheld by the beloved.

⁵⁷ On Ishtar's sexual gaze, see Walls, *Desire, Discord, Death*, 34–49. For examples of libidinous gazing in the Bible, see Song of Songs 4:9, 7:1; 2 Samuel 11:2–3 (David and Bathsheba), 13:1–14 (Tamar and Absalom).

wall. And when he saw Aseneth he was driven to distraction by her because she was so beautiful.”⁵⁸ Sight can lead to an aggressive, acquisitive desire that in turn leads to violence. These very physicalized, tactile notions of vision also, as we will see in Chapter 4, undergird accounts of how what a woman (or man) sees at the time of conception imprints itself on the fetus, that are found in ancient Babylonian divinatory and magical texts as well as in Greco-Roman medical and literary sources.⁵⁹ These aspects of the power and slipperiness of vision in the erotic, divine, demonic, or gynecological realms provoked practices designed to alleviate, negate, stimulate, or divert the eye and its effects. Thus did church fathers, physicians, and rabbis pursue a similar goal, albeit in different ways: to pattern a safe space in a potentially dangerous world.

On this list of dangers we must mention the ubiquitous “evil eye,” which is no less than the spread of extramissive vision.⁶⁰ In the late-antique world, all were under the very real threat of the evil eye.⁶¹ Like desire, the evil eye functioned according to understandings of how vision worked.⁶² If one looked upon a person, her body, her family, or her possessions with malevolence, that glance could have a very concrete corrosive effect. On the other hand, manifest good fortune, such as abundance or beauty, could ignite the evil eye, whether conceived of as belonging to a particular person or not.⁶³ The evil eye did not necessarily have to come from a particular place or person; it was also an invisible, malign force that could be excited simply by something or someone being overly visible. Greco-Roman, Babylonian, Zoroastrian, Christian, and rabbinic materials all evince an interest in various techniques designed to thwart, annul, divert, or channel the evil eye.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ *Joseph and Aseneth* 23:1–2 (trans. Cook, 495). For divergent assessments of dating and provenance see Bohak, *Joseph and Aseneth*, and Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*.

⁵⁹ Boustán, “Rabbi Ishmael’s miraculous conception.”

⁶⁰ See Bartsch, *Mirror of the Self*, 145, and, recently, Turan, “Wherever the sages set their eyes.”

⁶¹ See Finger, *Origins of Neuroscience*, 665–66; Gifford, *Evil Eye*; McDaniel, “Pupula duplex.” Perhaps the rabbinic phrase “an arrow in the eye of Satan” (b. Kiddushin 81b) comes from similar thinking about the evil eye; see Newmyer, “Talmudic medicine.”

⁶² E.g. John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Epistulam ad Philippenses* 1.8–11 (cf. *Homiliae in epistulam ad Galatas commentarius*). See Bartsch, *Mirror of the Self*, 140–59; Dickie, “Evil Eye”; and Limberis, “Eyes Infected by Evil.” Given the many times that John Chrysostom employs the notion of the evil eye, apparently in its literal sense, compare the denial of the physical power of the evil eye in *Homiliae in Epistulam ad Galatas Commentarius*. See Leyerle, “John Chrysostom.”

⁶³ The belief that a hostile eye could emit a glance that would damage the object of its sight is attested in classical antiquity in Greek and Near Eastern sources.

⁶⁴ In Zoroastrian cosmology, the invisible realm was (in part) occupied by demons of various kinds. The magic bowls of Babylonia and the amulets of Palestine demonstrate the ubiquity of belief in demons and the evil eye among Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and others. See Naveh and Shaked,

This preoccupation with the invisible realm brings us to Zoroastrian, Persian, and ancient Babylonian ideas of vision. Some of these ideas seem to have been of particular significance to Babylonian rabbis. While these rabbis, like their Palestinian counterparts, lived amidst a *mélange* of Greco-Roman and East Christian cultural traditions, they were also positioned closer to currents of Zoroastrian, Persian, and by extension, Indian, ideas about the visual.

Ophthalmology, the branch of medicine concerned with eye diseases and vision defects, was a preoccupation of ancient Babylonians. Babylonian mythical narrative, medico-magical, and divinatory texts as far back as the twelfth and eleventh centuries BCE, abound with myths, diagnoses, recipes, remedies, incantations, and curses designed to treat (or damage) or enhance the powers of the eye.⁶⁵ From Hammurabi's laws in the eighteenth century to the eleventh-century *Diagnostic Handbook*, to the seventh-century BCE medical tablets on eye disease, to physiognomic omens that date to the seventh century BCE or earlier, the ancient Babylonians were clearly preoccupied with the eye, its disorders, and its physiognomic and diagnostic significance.⁶⁶ Related to vision, even if not necessarily focused on the human eye as such, were the mathematical, astronomical, and geographical sciences pioneered by ancient Iranians and Indians, which, unlike such enterprises in ancient Greece, emphasized the arithmetical and empirical, rather than the geometric.⁶⁷ Scholars have found echoes of this Babylonian medico-scientific heritage in the Bavli's preoccupation with eye diseases and in many of its classifications and recommended cures.⁶⁸

As we move from ancient Babylonia to the Parthian (247 BCE–224 CE) and Sassanian (224–651 CE) Persian periods, the literary and material evidence is sparse and emerges mostly from post-Sassanian materials.

Magic Spells, A1, A2; Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 34, 99, 103, 173; Levene, *Magic Bowls*. This evidence also attests to the fluidity between these communities. The related dangerous ocular powers (a variety of extramissive vision) of certain persons or beings is found in Roman, Jewish, and Zoroastrian sources (e.g. Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 7.2.16–18, on Illyrian magicians and a group of Scythian women who could kill with a glance of their eyes; *Bundahišn* 33:9, on Zênigâw's lethal evil eye; for rabbinic sages' lethal gaze, see Chapter 2, n. 96).

⁶⁵ On the erotic gaze in the twelfth-century BCE *Enuma Elish*, see Walls, *Desire, Discord, Death*. On Babylonian ophthalmology, see Fincke, "Cuneiform Tablets"; Scurlock and Andersen, *Diagnoses*, 185–202. On Babylonian diagnosis and the handbook, see Stol, "Diagnosis and therapy"; Geller, "West meets East."

⁶⁶ Friberg, *A Remarkable Collection*; Hoyrup, "Algebra, surveyors"; Robson, *Mathematics*. On the ancient Indian, Babylonian, and Greek background to early Islamic optics, see Goldstein, *Dawn of Modern Science*, 118–20.

⁶⁷ Selz, "Remarks."

⁶⁸ Geller, "Akkadian healing therapies"; Geller, "Akkadian evil eye incantations"; Geller, "West meets East."

However, despite our partial picture, it must be recalled that just as there was cultural, intellectual, and physical interaction between the rabbis of Palestine and Babylonia, there was a similar kind of intercourse between other Greek and Aramaic-speaking communities (especially Christian).⁶⁹ The frequent and sometimes violent confrontations between the Roman and Persian empires also resulted in all kinds of cultural interaction.⁷⁰ Whether or not it is an accident of the evidence, the traveling of Greco-Roman artistic, religious, and intellectual traditions to Persia is more evident than the reverse journey.⁷¹

Greek philosophical, mathematical, and scientific works were translated into Persian under Shapur I, Khusrow I, and Khusrow II.⁷² Another conduit for Greco-Roman thought came from the Persian church (via Nisibis).⁷³ As others have suggested, the proximity of rabbinic academies to Christian schools in Persia may well have had more impact on the rabbis than imperial translation projects, although these projects, if they did indeed take place, might point to a wider diffusion of Greco-Roman intellectual culture.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Shaked and Naveh also show that there was contact on the level of those who were making and using amulets in Palestine and magic bowls in Babylonia (Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 34). See also Possekel, *Evidence*. The works of Eusebius and others continued to be copied by Syriac-speaking Christians of the East. See Becker, *Fear of God*, 115–17.

⁷⁰ This is shown extensively with respect to court and kingship practices and rituals in a study that actually examines both Iranian and Roman evidence of cross-cultural interaction between the Roman and Sassanian empires in Canepa, *Two Eyes*.

⁷¹ Thus not only do we see a continuation of the “Hellenized” culture of Parthia, especially evident in artistic remains, but scholars also argue for Roman input in architectural and artistic realms. However, it is arguable that it is not a function of the evidence but of the scholarly division of labor that has resulted in a skewed sense of Roman-Persian cross-cultural interaction. This is argued by Michael P. Canepa, who seeks to remedy this in his study, *Two Eyes*, and by Richard Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*.

⁷² On the influx of Greek philosophy into Zoroastrianism, see Zaehner, *Zurvan*, 150–51. See Guras, *Greek Thought*, 24–27, 34–45, for an account of the Persian historical traditions about the translation and library projects of great works from Greek and Sanskrit into Pahlavi. See also Walker, *Mar Qardagh*, 164–205. On the lesser and greater borrowings of Galenic and Greco-Roman medicine by the *Vizīdagihā ī Zādspram* and the *Syriac Book of Medicines*, respectively, see Gignoux, *Man and Cosmos*, 42–45.

⁷³ What Gül Russell has said about Greek medicine can be said of visual theories: “In spite of the problems concerning the availability of contemporary sources, one can argue that sufficient pre-conditions existed for the introduction of Greek medicine into Pre-Islamic Persia. They can be explored in the following areas: (a) medical practice and the presence of ‘Greek’ physicians; (b) the role of Syriac/Nestorian Christians under the Sassanians, and (c) textual transmission” (Russell, “Greek medicine”). See also Possekel, *Evidence*.

⁷⁴ See Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*, 3–8. The comparative analysis of rabbinic and Syriac texts on visibility awaits further study. For cultural and philosophical interaction between Rome and Persia, see Walker, *Mar Qardagh*, 202, and 12, 180, 203, 284. See further Walker, “Against the eternity of the stars.” The sixth century saw a vital “international philosophical” discourse, which would arguably have coincided with the end of the Amoraic period and the start of the Bavli’s redaction process.

However, if it is possible to speak of a “philosophical *koine* that had developed in late antiquity between the rival empires of Rome and Iran,” then we must not forget the broader Eastern world of which the Sassanian Persian empire was a part from ancient times.⁷⁵ In late antiquity this exchange, commercial and cultural, continued. Sources claim that Sassanian monarchs sent their doctors to India to appropriate (and translate) medical knowledge including pioneering ophthalmology, particularly complex surgical procedures. King Khusrow I Anōširvan (r. 531–579), for example, was said to have sent the physician Borzūya to India to study medicine.⁷⁶ The *Dēnkard* claims that Shapur I (or perhaps Shapur II) founded a school in Jundishapur, a meeting point of Indian, Persian, Greek, and Roman science, literature, and philosophy (and translation).⁷⁷ It reports that the third-century King Shapur commissioned not only translations into Middle Persian of the Zoroastrian Avesta but also “writings . . . which had been dispersed throughout India, the Byzantine empire, and other lands, which treated of medicine, astronomy, movement, time, space, substance, creation, becoming, passing away, change in quality, growth, and other processes and organs.”⁷⁸ Indeed, besides long-shared affinities and perhaps shared origins of early Iranian and Indians religions, Persia was linked to India (and beyond) via trade.⁷⁹ That the Sassanians exerted a strong

⁷⁵ Walker, *Mar Qardagh*, 12.

⁷⁶ Borzūya was said to have brought back and translated the *Pañcatantra* from the Sanskrit. The translation does not survive (de Blois, *Burzōy's Voyage*; de Blois, “*Pañcatantra*”). The Persian translation of this text was known as *Kalīla wa Demna* (Khaleghi-Motlagh, “Borzūya”). What this cultural appropriation or interaction meant for broader swathes of people in the Sassanian empire is hard to say, but such problems of determining access and spread of knowledge when thinking comparatively and cross-culturally also present themselves in the Palestinian rabbinic context.

⁷⁷ A. Shapur Shahbazi and Lutz Richter-Bernburg, “Gondēšāpur.” Becker, *Fear of God*, 94, points out that recent scholarship has questioned the historicity of traditions about the school at Jundishapur and suggested it was a “mythical invention.” Syriac-speaking Christians were supposed to have settled there in the fifth century, and Khusrow I was said to have given refuge to “Nestorians” there in the sixth century. See Nasr, “Life sciences, alchemy and medicine,” 397, who states that teaching was in Aramaic until the Arab conquest. Gerrit J. Reinink asserts that “Nestorian” physicians of the city “played a fundamental role in the transmission of Greek medical learning to the Arabs in Baghdad” (Reinink, “Theology and medicine,” 163).

⁷⁸ *Dēnkard* IV.19 (*DkM*. 412; text and trans. in Zaehner, *Zurvan*, 8) (*DkM* refers to the Madan edition of the *Dēnkard*). See also Shaki, “Greek influence.” Might we therefore profitably examine Babylonian rabbinic writings in concert with Indo-Iranian religious texts? See, e.g., Lubin, “Virtuosic exegesis”; Schmidt, “Between Jews and Greeks.” On traditions that linked Jews and Brahmins, see the fragment of Megasthenes quoted in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromatos* 1.15.72.5: “All the opinions expressed by the ancients about nature are found also among the philosophers outside Greece, some among the Indian Brahmins and others in Syria among those called Jews” (in Stern, ed. and trans., *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. 1, 46 [selection 14]).

⁷⁹ The so-called Indo-Iranian (Aryan) religions are thought to eventually have spawned the Indian Vedic and Iranian Avestan religions (Malandra, *Introduction*, 3–34; Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 1, 1–21; Stausberg, “Contextualizing the contexts”). Cf. Bryant, *Origins*.

cultural impact along trade routes is borne out in the archaeological record, and Zoroastrian sources claim that the impact went both ways.⁸⁰ In various fields of cultural and commercial activity, including science and medicine, Babylonians, then, were clearly as much part of the Indo-Iranian milieu as the Greco-Roman.⁸¹ We have long understood Palestinian rabbis as operating within a Greco-Roman orbit, and we are increasingly appreciating the wide span of cultural forces, from the East as well as the West, within which the rabbis of Babylonia lived.

This means that in considering Babylonian rabbinic ideas about vision, we might wish to consider ancient Indian ideas about vision. Here we have a rich array of texts from mythological epic, to Brahminical legal and philosophical writings, to early Buddhist law, philosophy, and narrative.⁸² Scholars of ancient Hindu and Zoroastrian sources have pointed to many shared terms and concepts, including those related to sight. Ancient Indian ideas about vision in ritual and other contexts, for example, were indebted to the notion that “casting one’s eyes upon a person and touching him were related activities.”⁸³ As in Zoroastrian texts, vision, in Brahminical sources, is essential for ritual and human–divine interactions and can convey impurity.⁸⁴

Unlike in Greco-Roman writings, the precise mechanics of vision are not articulated in extended Persian treatises, but texts by Zoroastrians do contain many ideas about vision.⁸⁵ We find that vision is understood as a

⁸⁰ The Sassanians (and the Parthians, before them), along with Sogdians, acted as conduits for trade from places as scattered as India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Russia, Japan, and China, and Sassanian coins and other material remains are found in those places, too. We should emphasize that even before the Arab invasions in the seventh century, there were substantial contacts between Arabs and Iranians, with parts of Arabia coming under Sassanian rule; Ctesiphon was a central trading city with a large Jewish presence (Frye, “Commerce III”; Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road*).

⁸¹ Cyril Elgood makes this corrective point (Elgood, *Medical History*, 371–72). On the use of lenses, see Berreta, “From eye to eye-glass.”

⁸² Gonda, *Eye and Gaze*.

⁸³ Gonda, *Eye and Gaze*, 19. Gregory Schopen and Jacob Kinnard show the same to be true in early Indian Buddhism (Schopen, *Bones, Stones*, 114–47; Kinnard, “The field of the Buddha’s presence”). See further Eck, *Darsān*, 1–20. On the relationship between ancient Hindu and Zoroastrian understandings of the malevolent gaze see White, “*Netra Tantra*”; on ancient Indian visual theory, see White, *Sinister Yogis*, 125, 162–64. Besides the shared notion of the contaminating gaze (e.g. of menstruating women in *Manusmṛiti* 3:239; Pahlavi *Vd.* 16.4) there is also that of the ritually efficacious gaze (e.g. *Vendīdād* 19:19, Pahlavi commentary on *Vendīdād* 9.32 on ritual gazing, and Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, 166). For sources on activation of the gaze in ancient Brahminical ritual contexts see sources in Gonda, *Vedic Ritual*, 75–76, 170; Gonda, *Eye and Gaze*. Compare to *b. Berakhot* 51a–b for the person reciting the blessing over wine before grace to ‘set one’s eyes’ (*noten ‘einav*) on the cup.

⁸⁴ *Manusmṛiti* 3:239–41 (ed. Olivelle, 120); further rules on the gaze include *Manusmṛiti* 4:37–38, 142 (ed. Olivelle, 126, 131); in Zoroastrian sources: *Dēnkard* III.26.

⁸⁵ See the ninth-century *Dēnkard* (on medicine, esp. III.157), the ninth-century *Vizīdagihā ī Zādspram* (on medicine and the body, esp. 29–31), and the *Bundahišn* (on medicine and human reproduction,

fiery substance that stems from the brain and that is also related, in males, to the production of semen.⁸⁶ Hymns and religious texts make it clear that the eye of divinities, demons, and humans could express destructive or beneficent gazes; that eros was conveyed through the eye.⁸⁷ These visual powers are all amply attested in later Persian epics such as the *Šāh-nāma*. Other areas in which the gaze was prominent include rituals around corpses and purity concerns. In the latter case, the gaze of menstruating women renders objects impure,⁸⁸ and as Mary Boyce puts it,

If a pure person has even indirect contact with an impure person or object, his purity is vitiated, the baleful influence running like a current between them. The gaze of the eyes can in extreme cases create this contact.⁸⁹

An inverse use of vision is present in the ritual involving the gaze of a dog (*sagdid*) that was supposed to drive away the demons that came to attack a corpse.⁹⁰ The *sagdid* was also part of the *baresnnum* – a purification ritual for the purpose of driving away evil spirits.⁹¹ As in Brahminical sources, the gaze has a ritual function.⁹²

esp. 15 and 18). See these sources as discussed in Gignoux, “Dēnkard”; Gignoux, “Zadspram”; MacKenzie, “Bundahišn.”

⁸⁶ Daryace, “Sight, semen and the brain,” suggests a common Indo-European tradition connecting the eyes, the brain, and semen but argues that these ultimately lag behind the old Iranian traditions. A variety of Middle Persian texts connect sight and virility through the brain, as semen was supposed to stem from the brain and flow along the spinal cord. “The seed is placed in the brain, runs down through the veins of the back, and the development of the embryo takes place by the force of the *frawahr*, the vital soul (Mid. Pers. *gyān*) appearing on the fourth month in the shape of a body and producing vision because it is luminous” (Gignoux, “Health in Persia”). See also Soudavar, “Significance.”

⁸⁷ On the malevolent, destructive gaze, see *Vendīdād* 18.63–64; *Vendīdād* 22.2.9; *Bundahišn* 33.9. For the erotic gaze of the first humans as focused on genitalia, see *Bundahišn* 14.28; *Pahlavi Rivāyat* 8 (Ohrmazd and Spandarmad gaze at each other). For a discussion of the potency of the evil or beneficent gaze in Zoroastrian sources, see Forrest, *Evil in Early Iran*, 83–112.

⁸⁸ Pahlavi *Vd.* 16.4: a menstruating woman should therefore stay away from “fire, water, the spread *barasman* and the just man” (Boyce, “‘Pādyāb’ and ‘nērang,’” 284). On an evil woman’s capacity to dry up water with her gaze, see *Vendīdād*, 18.46, (trans. Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 1, 301). See also sources discussed in Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, 307; Elman, “He in his cloak”; Secunda, “Dashtana–,” esp. 365–72. On the possible relationship between such beliefs and the *Baraita Deniddah* 1:1, see Elman, “He in his cloak.” Koren points out that theories of the particular malevolence of the menstruous gaze are to be found in Aristotle, *De Insomniis*, 459a–460a, and Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 8:79–81 (Koren, “Kabbalistic physiology”).

⁸⁹ Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 1, 304. See Elman, “Middle Persian culture,” 183. As in Brahminical sources these concerns are couched in terms of purity–impurity.

⁹⁰ The use of a “four-eyed” dog, a dog with a spot above the eye, is considered efficacious (*Vendīdād* 7.2); *Zandī Fragardī jud-dēw-dād* 506 (thanks to Prof. Elman for sharing this source with me).

⁹¹ De Jong, “Purification in *absentia*,” 309; cf. Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation*, 40, n. 39, who regards this explanation for the dog’s gaze as secondary to its role as a “precursor to [the corpse’s] flesh being eaten by birds.” *Šāyest nē-šāyest* 2.65 (Tavadia, ed., 53). Cf. *b. Berakhot* 18a.

⁹² See sources in n. 82 above.

Central to Zoroastrian conceptions of vision are the concepts of *gētīg* and *mēnōg*.⁹³ *Gētīg* comprises the material, visible, and tangible aspect of the world; *mēnōg* refers to the aspect of the world that is essentially mental, invisible, and intangible.⁹⁴ The *Dēnkard* declares: "The definition of *gētīg* is: a visible, tangible thing."⁹⁵ Shaul Shaked points out that, "although the distinction between the two concepts is based on the visibility of the one and the invisibility of the other, the invisibility of *mēnōg* is somewhat ambiguous. It is, in particular, noteworthy that many of the spiritual entities appear from time to time in a variety of forms." The two qualities of *mēnōg* and *gētīg* are complementary; each is the twin or counterpart of the other.⁹⁶ The material world is seen as the domain of good, while evil in the world exists "parasitically" in the material world.⁹⁷ The capacity for viewing *mēnōg* was considered to be a rare spiritual achievement, a cultivation of "[th]e organ for such vision . . . called the eye of the soul."⁹⁸

⁹³ Shaked, "Mēnōg and Gētīg" and "Gētīg and mēnōg." See sources cited in n. 85 above as well as *Vizīdagihā ī Zadspram* 30:17, 30.23, 35.79; *DkM*. 242.6 (treat the various substances, e.g. semen, supposed to give light to the fire of the eyes); Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems*, 90–106. While these sources post-date the Sassanian period, scholars hold that they preserve the traditions of earlier centuries (Bausani, *Religion in Iran*, 10–15; Skjærvø, "Zoroastrian dualism," 57–60).

⁹⁴ See *DkM* 120.20–22, "Whatever is visible with bodily eye and tangible with bodily hand is getig," (trans. Shaked, "Mēnōg and gētīg," 63).

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ See Shaked, "Gētīg and mēnōg," 575: "Although these terms refer to two types of existence, they can also denote two worlds, two realms. The one in which we live is the *gētīg* world, the other is the world of *mēnōg*. These two worlds coexist simultaneously, but they are often portrayed as representing two different stages in the history of the world. According to the classical Zoroastrian cosmogony of the Pahlavi books, the world was first created in *mēnōg*, then, according to one version, as *gētīg* in *mēnōg*, and only finally as *gētīg*. The eschatological world is spoken of sometimes also in terms of *mēnōg*. . . *Mēnōg* reflects the changes brought about in *gētīg*, for example in so far as the moral and religious behavior of individuals affects their *mēnōg* counterparts."

⁹⁷ Thus, Shaked alerts us, there is no oppositional dualism of *gētīg*-evil v. *mēnōg*-good, though this changes in the later Sassanian period. The latter thinking, whereby demons are identified with the invisible world, seems to be echoed in the Babylonian Talmud. Before this dualism, the world is conceived of as mixed with good and bad spirits existing in both aspects; see *b. Berakhot* 6a, where the rabbis discuss the impossibility of viewing all the demons that surround a person, the damage that they cause, and a recipe for viewing them; it is likely that this passage reflects a Zoroastrian concept of invisible demons. *B. 'Avodah Zarah* 20b describes the angel of death as being "all eyes" and killing with his eyes; cf. *Lamentations Rabbah* 1:3 (ed. Buber, 32a). The Zoroastrian Mithra appears in the *Avesta* as a being with ten thousand ears and eyes (Bausani, *Religion in Iran*, 19). See further: *b. Hagigah* 4b for an encounter between R. Bibi b. Abbaye and the angel of death, who used to visit him often; *b. Pesahim* 110b for a sense that the Babylonian rabbis appreciated that they were more particular about matters of demonology and magic than their Palestinian counterparts; Gafni, *Jews of Babylonia*, 161–76.

⁹⁸ The eye of the soul is "*jān chašm*"; Shaked, "Some Islamic reports," 48. Shaked links this to Diogenes Laertius' description of how the Persian Magi say "that the gods appear to them. Moreover, they say that the air is filled with shapes that enter the eyes of the sharp-sighted through a stream caused by evaporation" (Shaked, "Quests," 76).

Another distinctive aspect of Sassanian Zoroastrian visuality was the notion of the righteous person as pedagogical image. Special individuals were able to see and also manifest the domain of *mēnōg*. One was supposed to make a “mirror of oneself” in terms of one’s character, so that the “other man looks at it, sees it and learns from it.”⁹⁹ This notion of holy people whose viewing is good for the soul is shared in Greco-Roman and Christian religion and is present in rabbinic sources. Certain people (especially kings), beings, and entities were endowed with *xwarrah*, a luminous glow.¹⁰⁰ Unsurprisingly, *xwarrah* is part of the light and fire, which are traced and linked to Ohrmazd, the supreme deity.¹⁰¹ In the spiritual economy of Zoroastrianism, fire itself had sacred properties and was ritually deployed to annihilate demons and darkness at home, and in special ritual ceremonies in temples.¹⁰²

Even without a unified or clearly stated Zoroastrian or Persian theory of vision as such, we can infer different aspects of how vision was understood from a variety of sources.¹⁰³ Clearly, both extramissive and intromissive ideas of vision had their counterparts in Zoroastrian Persia. The evil eye is widely attested as a live concern; in addition, there are complex understandings about the stuff of which the world is composed and its relationship

⁹⁹ *Dēnkard* v1.223 (in *Wisdom* trans. Shaked, 87). See also *Dēnkard* v1.224 (ibid.): “They held this too: No person is taught or becomes better by a man except by one who disciplines himself and who arouses other people by the goodness which he possesses. The reason for this is that a person sees a fault by the measure of one who is disciplined according to law; for in the material world a man sees himself in that thing that is brighter and more luminous than himself. Even if a man watched an earthenware vessel for a long time, he would not see himself, but when he looks at a clean mirror he sees himself. This is because metal is brighter to the sight than people, and an earthenware vessel is darker.” Similar ideas about the iconicity of holy men and women were in circulation in late antiquity; see, e.g., with reference to Rabbula as an icon, Bowersock, “Syriac life of Rabbula”; Miller “Strategies.” See further: *Dēnkard* v1.226, 228 (in *Wisdom*, trans. Shaked, 89); on vision, religion, good and evil, see *Dēnkard* v1.260–61 (in *Wisdom*, trans. Shaked, 101); on vision and blindness: “There is a time when one ought to make oneself deaf-like, blind-like, or mute-like. For blindness is best when he sees and covets a thing which is harmful to the soul” (*Wisdom*, trans. Shaked, 203, E34c).

¹⁰⁰ The Avestan *khvarenah* (Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. II, 93–116). According to some scholars, the king’s *xwarrah* is depicted iconographically (Gnoli, “A Sasanian iconography”).

¹⁰¹ *Dādestān ī dēnīg* 63 (as per Shaki, “Dādestān ī dēnīg”). See also *Bundahišn*, 1:26. On divine or Ohrmazdean properties as characterized by light and as having both *gētīg* (material, visible) and *mēnōg* (spiritual, invisible) existence, see Lincoln, “Center of the world.”

¹⁰² Fire had a special place in Zoroastrian ritual and was kindled at home to drive out demons and for purification purposes, as well as in special ritual ceremonies in the fire temples. See *Wisdom*, ed. and trans. Shaked, 89: “They held this too: Every person should be diligent in kindling fire in the middle third of the night whenever many demons should be smitten by it. As long as the fire burns in every place that it faces it cuts away obscurity and darkness, destroying and extinguishing them. . . . That light annihilates darkness, and in the spiritual world it stands in front of the soul of the man for whom it was kindled, and makes it bright, good and at ease.” For a prayer to the luminous moon that refers to seeing him face to face, see *Yasht* 7 to the Moon.

¹⁰³ Shaked, “La ‘vision humaine.’”

to different levels of perception, including a spiritual vision. Such ideas, together with vibrant Christian Persian scholarship in philosophy and medicine, would gain momentum with the Arab conquest of the seventh century and ultimately find its expression in the great works of optics on the ninth through twelfth centuries under the Ummayyad Caliphate.¹⁰⁴

As with Persian visual theory, rabbinic conceptions of the eye fail to lend themselves to systematic exposition. We have to glean from various rabbinic sources to discover how they used and understood vision. The Tannaim (sages of first- to third-century Palestine) would have been exposed to and part of the “visually voracious” Roman world; some of their writings evidence critiques of this world that are similar to those in Christian apologetic texts. Greco-Jewish and rabbinic texts point to a similar simultaneous deployment and critique of visuality, often put in highly gendered terms, in order to advocate for a restrained sexuality. The eye is thus presented as a stumbling block to this restraint, very much in need of training. Such thought, and the related notion of women’s dangerous visibility, pervades the tractate *Sotah*, for example. So, too, is sight’s physical impact taken for granted in the tractate *Zavim*, which considers how the sight of certain objects, or even their fantasy, can cause various classes of seminal flux. Beside the realm of the erotic, the value of visual testimony and empirical observation is also articulated in Tannaitic sources, in halakhic and theological contexts. The rabbis also consider various visual disabilities. While vision appears in Tannaitic sources it presents nothing close to the thematic apparent in later sources.¹⁰⁵

As we move to later sources, we find rabbis thinking about *specula* and catatropics, considering divine visibility, discussing optical illusions (*ahizat ‘enayim*) and distortion, and considering telescopic vision along with a surprising variety of eye diseases and treatments.¹⁰⁶ Palestinian and

¹⁰⁴ On Persian contribution to Arabic optical theory see Kheirandish, “Optics”; Frye (ed.), *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. iv, 396; Sabra, *Optics, Astronomy and Logic*; Hogendijk and Sabra, *Enterprise of Science*; Rashed (ed.), *Thabit ibn Qurra*. The earliest free-standing medical treatise written in Hebrew is *The Book of Asaf the Physician* (ed. Muntner), whose suggested date and provenance ranges from Persia, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Italy from the third to seventh or tenth centuries (Lieber, “Asaf’s ‘Book of Medicines’”; Bar Sela and Hoff, “Asaf on anatomy and physiology”). The treatise does deal with vision and the eyes, claiming that “the light of the spirit” (Munich) or the “light of the soul” (Oxford) “is in the eyes” (trans. Bar Sela and Hoff, “Asaf,” 366), and that “the eyes are the lights of the body. They are also the lights of the heart through which the heart sees, to understand everything. The eyes do not see anything without the heart to understand it. They also enlighten the heart, and the one cannot exist without the other” (trans. Bar Sela and Hoff, “Asaf,” 370).

¹⁰⁵ E.g., *m. Hagigah* 1:1; *m. Megillah* 4:6.

¹⁰⁶ E.g. *Genesis Rabbah* 67:3 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:756–57): R. Levi’s categorization of the six organs, three of which a person can control and three of which he cannot (the eye, the ear and the nose).

Babylonian sources alike document a variety of traditions regarding the eye and its diseases. Mar Samuel is a figure around whom medical traditions conglomerate, including a fair amount on eye treatments.¹⁰⁷ He is said to have regarded eye treatment as imperative and even worth doing in violation of the Sabbath because of his theory that the veins of the eyes are connected to the heart.¹⁰⁸ Palestinian rabbis consider humans to be like angels but unlike animals because they have peripheral vision.¹⁰⁹ The evil eye presents a concern for Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis alike.¹¹⁰ Palestinian traditions reported in the Bavli consider the various parts of the eye (sclera, iris, faculty of vision) and its contributors (father, mother, God).¹¹¹ The Bavli evinces a demonology whose visual terms seem to owe much to Zoroastrian concepts of demonology and visibility: demons are invisible, but a recipe or device allows a rabbi to see them; he falls ill but is cured by his colleagues.¹¹²

This abbreviated and partial sampling of rabbinic ideas about visual mechanics gives some sense of the variety of contexts in which thinking about vision surfaces in rabbinic literature. One impression emerges very clearly: the rabbis took seeing seriously. They were obviously living in a physical and spiritual world in which seeing could be precarious, dangerous even, and, as this book argues, they did not shy away from considering and shaping this sense in their deliberations.

See also: rabbinic estimations of the capacity of a shepherd's sight (*b. Bekhorot* 54b); an account of the use of a telescope (*b. 'Eruvin* 43b); Abraham and his mastery over eyes among other organs (*b. Nedarim* 32b). One might argue that the first several folios of *b. Bava Batra*, which treat *hezeq re'iyah*, damage caused by seeing or overlooking from adjacent property, is in part a meditation on the deleterious effects of vision and exposure. On walking too much or taking long strides as bad for the eyes, see *b. Ketubot* 111a and *b. Berakhot* 43b. On catatrophics and theophany, see *Genesis Rabbah* 4:4 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 1:27–28). On optical illusion see Alexander, “Talmudic concept of conjuring.”

¹⁰⁷ E.g. *b. Shabbat* 78b, 108b; *b. Bava Metsi'a* 85a; *b. 'Avodah Zarah* 28b. See also *b. Hullin* 57b: Rav spent eighteen months conducting experiments on eye diseases in sheep; *b. Hullin* 49a: an animal's lung improves eyesight; *b. Ketubot* 60b; *b. 'Avodah Zarah* 29a: fish is good for eyesight.

¹⁰⁸ *B. 'Avodah Zarah* 28b.

¹⁰⁹ *Genesis Rabbah* 8:11 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 1:64–65).

¹¹⁰ *Y. Sanhedrin* 1:2, 18c; *b. Berakhot* 55b suggests encircling the thumb with the opposite fist (a *fica* gesture) in order to ward off the evil eye, even presenting a remedy for someone to neutralize his very own evil eye. See Kalmin, “evil eye”; Turan, “Wherever the sages set their eyes.”

¹¹¹ *B. Niddah* 30a.

¹¹² *B. Berakhot* 6a. See Gafni, “Babylonian Rabbinic culture”; Elman, “The world of the ‘Saboraim,’” 412–13. On the demon Astwihād killing his victims by looking them in the eye, see *Bundahisn*, 27.41, 43–45 (on which see Kangwa, “Astwihād”).

God gazing and homovisuality

When will you restore the glory, so we could ascend three times a year
and see the face of the *shekhinah*?

Pesiqta Rabbati 1 (ed. Friedmann, 1a)¹

“Show me your God,” said Hadrian to R. Joshua b. Ḥananyah.² “When shall I come to see the face of God?” asks the Psalmist.³ For emperor and Psalmist alike, the logic here was obvious: If one had a god, one wanted to see him or her.⁴ The desire to see God was no less obvious to the Jewish sages of late-antique Palestine and Babylonia – indeed, these men thought of “seeing” or “receiving the face” of the *shekhinah* (God’s presence) as the ultimate religious reward.⁵ Even in the polemical context of *b. Hullin* 59b, R. Joshua b. Ḥananyah, who compares the difficulty of beholding God to trying to look at the sun, does not negate God’s theoretical visibility.⁶ His analogy suggests, rather, that God is hypervisible and too bright to absorb. Such an analogy would make eminent sense in a world in which luminosity (or rays of energy or fire) was thought to be bound up with vision, and to be especially pronounced in sacred beings.⁷

¹ The date of *Pesiqta Rabbati* is uncertain, with scholars’ suggestions ranging from the sixth or seventh century (Sperber, “*Pesikta Rabbati*,” 12–13; Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, 302), to the ninth and beyond (e.g. Herr, “Midrash”).

² *B. Hullin* 59b. The story in *b. Hullin* 59b–60a has an unnamed Roman emperor, understood to refer to Hadrian, addressing the second-century Tanna. This is one of several post-Tannaitic stories in Palestinian and Babylonian sources in which R. Joshua has theological discussions with the emperor and/or “heretics.” Most would see these stories as apocryphal (cf. Herr, “Significance”).

³ Psalms 42:2. ⁴ Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 106–67.

⁵ This is not to espouse a uniform conception across rabbinic sources.

⁶ Compare to the simile of the difficulty in looking at the sun in Jerome, *Tractatus in Psalmos* 96 (Homily 73); Ephrem, *Hymn de Fide* 75.1–10; Avitus, *De Spiritalis Historiae Gestis* 3.69–73. The relationship between the sun and divinity is a topic of some scholarly debate, stimulated also by depictions of Helios, the sun-god in Palestinian synagogue art, and sources such as *Sefer Harazim*. Of note is the recipe in *Sefer Harazim* 4:25–73 (ed. Margaliot, 98–99) for seeing the sun during the day and the night. See the provocative Goodman, “image of God.”

⁷ These notions would have been intelligible across Roman and Persian worlds. On the idea that divine and sacred beings were extra-luminous and therefore difficult to behold, see Frank, *Memory*,

However, unlike the Psalmist and the Roman emperor, the rabbis lived in a world without a dedicated place in which to see their God and without cult objects to behold – that is, in a world without a temple and without divine images.⁸ There had been no temple since the Romans destroyed the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE, in their eventually successful attempt to quash the Jewish Revolt. Thus, the question driving the inquiry in this chapter and the next is: how did the rabbis see God in a post-temple era? That the rabbis conceptualized God in visible terms and thought of seeing God as a peak religious experience is itself hardly a new observation.⁹ In this chapter and the next we will trace the ways in which the rabbis envisioned God in their ritual and narrative expansions and expositions of biblical and second temple traditions about the temple and temple pilgrimage. We will also situate these rabbinic visions of the divine in the context of Greco-Roman religion and pilgrimage, and across the works of the Palestinian Tannaim (sages of the first to early third centuries CE), and the Amoraim of Palestine and Babylonia (sages of the third to fourth and early sixth centuries respectively), and later editors and storytellers.

Framing our investigation around the temple's destruction follows the rabbis' own framing of the question of God's visibility. Across its territories, Roman imperialism effected the overturning of established ideas, pieties, and ways of being in the world. For the rabbis, Roman intervention, particularly in response to Jewish insurrection, resulted in a crisis of (divine)

14, 94–96, 160–65. For a discussion of the variety of ways in which Philo, Aristotelians, Platonists, Stoics, and others used the sun, literally and metaphorically, to understand divinity and its visibility, see Calabi, *God's Acting*, 57–72. The sun was also central to the thought and theology of those such as Galen, Plotinus, Porphyry, and Julian (Frede, "Galen's theology"). On the importance of fire and other luminaries in Zoroastrianism, see Boyce, "Ataš." The late Sasanian *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 53.3–5 requires Zoroastrians to pray in the presence of fire or heavenly fire (i.e. the sun or moon). On radiance in ancient near eastern traditions, see Smith, "Near Eastern background"; Sanders, "Old light."

⁸ As we shall see, the question of whether and how God took visible and material form, even in the days of the temple, was the subject of speculation on the part of the rabbis and others. The question was sometimes also linked to the second commandment (Exodus 20:4–6) which in some cases gave the Jews a reputation for a curious lack of images in their temple worship.

⁹ Boyarin, "Ocular desire"; Wolfson, *Speculum*, 13–52; Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 97–101. Scholars have drawn our attention to the ways in which humans were seen as "images of God" by the rabbis and to how God was anthropomorphized (Schofer, *Confronting Vulnerability*, 68–76, 169–90; Lorberbaum, *Image of God*; Goshen Gottstein, "Body," and references therein). Others, including Lorberbaum, have attended to the relationship between the human as *imago dei* (or *tselem elohim*) and the Roman imperial cult (Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 93–101). However, as discussed in the introduction to this book, my practice here is not to assume "vision" every time the term "image" or its like come into play. Instead, my concern here is to examine ways in which the rabbis explicitly thought about *seeing* per se, and while they frequently invoke images (e.g. icons and statues) in describing God, I am only interested in those instances in which the sense of sight itself is invoked in these contexts.

vision.¹⁰ In this regard, there was a political, as well as theological dimension to rabbinic ways of seeing God.

Without the physical presence of the temple, the rabbis chiefly relegated divine visibility to the past of the temple era or postponed it to the messianic future of the “world to come.” These sages placed the possibility of a physical, material, and visual encounter with God into a mythic past, with consequences for their willingness to contemplate such an encounter in their everyday present. The recognition that rabbinic ways of seeing God were (carefully) shaped by absence, by gaps in time and space, informs my analysis of the import of God gazing in rabbinic piety.

The fact that, in their minds, the rabbis lived in an era informed by a crisis of (divine) visuality is related to another claim that I will make concerning the production (by rabbis and others) of a Jewish singularity. The vaunted uniqueness of how Jews saw their God, whether cast as a mark of pride or a badge of shame, played its part in the production of Jewish identity. As I have argued in the Introduction, some of this supposed singularity stems from misunderstandings of the second commandment that have in turn obscured the existence of a strong tradition, from the Bible and onwards, of God’s visibility.

The present chapter centers around the concept of “homovisuality” and traces how the Tannaim developed the biblical commands concerning cultic pilgrimage into laws for a bygone Jerusalem temple pilgrimage to see and be seen by God; it shows how these laws were subsequently transformed by the later sages, especially by the Babylonians, into a radically reciprocal ocular experience whose loss becomes a focal point. Our investigation highlights the degree to which *b. Hagigah* is centered on the desire for, and loss of, the sight of God’s face. The next chapter, on “heterovisuality,” considers an alternative model of vision, one that concentrates on the cult objects that the rabbis imagined pilgrims of previous generations to have seen as part of the “seeing” ritual in the Jerusalem temple.

From biblical visuality to Babylonian homovisuality

There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet
T. S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

¹⁰ For the argument that Roman imperialism impacted religions across the empire, see Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, vol. 1, 313–63. On Pausanias writing Greek religious subjectivity as an act of resistance against Roman imperialism, see Elsner, “Pausanias.” For the impact of Roman imperialism on the Jews, see Schwartz, *Imperialism*.

The rabbis were heirs to biblical and second temple traditions in which God was seen in a variety of ways and toward a variety of ends. The rabbis, in turn, expanded upon these ways of seeing. Thus, they elaborated on the divine theophanies at Sinai and in the Tabernacle, and on visual encounters, described in biblical sources, between God and the patriarchs, and God and Moses.¹¹ They also did not hesitate to read divine sightings into biblical narrative even when they were not explicitly mentioned. For example, some midrashic sources explain Isaac's blindness as the result of his having gazed at the *shekhinah* as he lay on the altar waiting to be sacrificed by his father.¹² Rabbinic sources also take an expansive view that *all* ancient Israelites saw God at the Red Sea, according to one tradition even fetuses, whose mothers' bellies became transparent in order to allow them to experience this revelation.¹³

The Bible provided narrative fodder with which rabbis elaborated theophanic encounters. It also laid out ritual and cultic contexts for God gazing. A clear example, which invites rabbinic reinterpretation, is found in Deuteronomy:

Three times a year all your males shall see the face (*yir'eh et-pene*) of the Lord your God in the place that he shall choose – on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the Feast of Weeks, and on the Feast of Tabernacles – and they shall not see the face (*yir'eh et-pene*) of the Lord empty.¹⁴

As we will see, this verse (and several biblical parallels) provides the basis for the rabbinic depiction of a ritual of “seeing,” *re'iyat panim*, accompanied by a sacrifice, *re'iyat qorban*, and located in the temple. The rabbis take the Bible's phrase “they shall see the face of the Lord,” which is used in a common sense, though with a specific theological significance, and turn it into a technical term for a ritual of their own invention.

¹¹ On the superiority of seeing over hearing at the Sinai revelation, see *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma'el, Bahodesh* 2 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 207). On these and other sources see Fraade, “Hearing and seeing.”

¹² *Genesis Rabbah* 65:10 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:719–20). See also *Genesis Rabbah* 86:5 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:1058), in which Potiphar “saw the *shekhinah* hovering over him [Joseph],” derived from *Genesis* 39:3–4, “And his master *saw* that the Lord was with him . . . and Joseph found favor in his eyes.”

¹³ *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma'el, Shirta* 1 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 121); *b. Sotah* 30b–31a. On infants and fetuses seeing the *shekhinah*, see *t. Sotah* 6:4; *y. Sotah* 5:4, 20c. On the superiority of the vision of a mere maidservant to that of Ezekiel and Isaiah, see *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma'el, Beshallah* 3 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 126–27) and *Mekhilta Derabbi Shim'on bar Yohai* to Exodus 15:2 (ed. Epstein-Melamed, 78). See also *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma'el, Bahodesh* 3 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 212).

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 16:16. See also Exodus 23:14–17, 34:23–24. For the use of similar language in the context of the septennial obligation to hear the reading of the Torah (*haqhel*), see Deuteronomy 31:11, “When all of Israel comes to see the face of the Lord your God in the place that he shall choose.”

As has been noted by many scholars, “seeing the face” in Near Eastern cultic parlance usually referred to seeing an image of the deity or to the privilege of having an audience with a king (a deliberate emphasis of the king’s divinity).¹⁵ This is clearly the original meaning of the biblical phrase in this context. Centuries later, the Masoretes and some targumists would, in their discomfort with biblical depictions of a visible God, render the active verb “will see” (Qal: *yir’eh*) as the passive “will appear” (Niphal: *yera’eh*). Rather than the pilgrim traveling with the purpose of seeing God, the pilgrim went to show himself to God instead.¹⁶ Yet the rabbis and some targumists continued happily with the notion that pilgrims went to the temple to see God.¹⁷ What exactly this meant would await its fullest elaboration in post-Tannaitic sources.

The laws derived from this verse are laid out in *m. Hagigah*, which is dedicated in part to the laws of the pilgrimage festivals of Sukkot, Pesah, and Shavu’ot. The Palestinian and Babylonian talmudic tractates of *Hagigah* follow and elaborate *m. Hagigah*, as well as other Tannaitic sources. An examination of the Tannaitic materials reveals the creation of a *re’iyah* ritual that envisions a very particular kind of pilgrim. We will see that the later Babylonian sources take up this particularity in ways that emphasize what we will call “homovisuality.”

Re’iyah

Without the temple, what did the Tannaim do with the biblical injunction to make pilgrimage three times each year to see God’s face? By the time these rabbis were flourishing, the temple was a thing of the past. As they did with much biblical and temple-related ritual that was effectively defunct, the Tannaim brought pilgrimage under the domain of *halakhah*.¹⁸ *M. Hagigah* 1:1–2 states:

¹⁵ Terrien, *The Psalms*, 268; Davies, “The ark in the Psalms,” 60–61; Fowler, “The meaning of ‘*lipnê YHWH*’”; Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*; Uehlinger, “Anthropomorphic cult statuary,” 152–53; van der Toorn “Iconic book analogies,” 242; Smith, “‘Seeing God.’” For the expression to “see the king’s face,” see 2 Kings 25:19; Jeremiah 52:25; Esther 1:14.

¹⁶ Geiger, *Urschrift*, 337. The Septuagint, Vulgate, and Peshitta also opted for the passive in these cases. Other instances where the Masoretic text reconfigures seeing God into appearing before God are: Psalms 42:3, 84:8; Isaiah 1:12. For a stimulating discussion of God’s face and its erasure, see Chavel, “Face of God.” For a brief history of Exodus 23:13–17, 34:23–24, and Deuteronomy 16:16–17, see Naeh, “*En em lamasoret*,” 412–17.

¹⁷ E.g. *Fragmentary Targum* to Exodus 23:20 which reads *lemehme* (to see), and *Targum Neofiti* Deuteronomy 31 also has *lemehmeyeh*. On anthropomorphism, and its avoidance, in the Targumim, see Klein, “The preposition ‘*qdm*,’” 502–7, and references therein.

¹⁸ While the rabbinic movement emerged after the destruction of the temple, much of its earliest texts focused on cultic matters. Over half the Mishnah’s laws concern temple, sacrifice, and purity (Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 219, and Goldenberg, “Destruction”).

All are obligated in *re'iyah* ("seeing") except for the deaf-mute, the mentally incompetent, the minor, the hermaphrodite, the androgyne, women, slaves who are not freed, the lame, the blind (*hasome*), the sick, and the old person who cannot ascend with his feet . . .

The school of Shammai says: the *re'iyah* is two coins, the *hagigah* is one coin. The school of Hillel says: the *re'iyah* is one coin, the *hagigah* is two coins.

Tannaitic sources delineate three separate obligations for the pilgrimage festivals: *re'iyah* (seeing), *hagigah* (festivity) and *simḥah* (rejoicing).¹⁹ The rabbis nominalize these terms, transforming them from verbal expressions in the biblical text to nouns defining ritual acts. This is both a ritual and a terminological innovation on the part of the Mishnah.²⁰ Here, the Mishnah exempts certain categories of people from the obligation of *re'iyah*, and it appears from *m. Hagigah* 1:2 that *re'iyah* itself is conceived of as having a sacrificial component.²¹

The Tannaitic legal-exegetical commentary *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma'el* dissects the injunction at Exodus 23:14–17:

"Three times" (*regalim*, lit. "feet") – those who walk with their feet, to exclude (*lehotsi'*) the lame.

"He will see" – to exclude the blind.

"Your males" – to exclude women.

"All your males" – this excludes the hermaphrodite and the androgyne.

"Read this Torah in front of all of Israel (Deuteronomy 31:11)" – to exclude converts and slaves.

"In their hearing (Deuteronomy 31:11)" – to exclude the deaf-mute.

"And you shall rejoice (Deuteronomy 16:11)" – to exclude the sick and the minor.

"In front of the Lord your God (Deuteronomy 16:11)" – to exclude the impure. From here they said, "All are obligated in *re'iyah* except for the deaf-mute, the mentally incompetent, the minor, the hermaphrodite, the androgyne, the lame, the blind, the sick and the old person." (*m. Hagigah* 1:1)²²

Here we see the Tannaim read "shall see" (Exodus 23:17) to exclude those who do not see, the blind, from *re'iyah*. The *Mekhilta* passage elaborates

¹⁹ For all three, see n. 23 below. On the lack of *suma* in the Tosefta and Yerushalmi's Mishnah, see Halivni, *Sources*, 578–79.

²⁰ As per Anderson, "Expression of joy," 236. Note the designation, *re'iyah* ("vision"), rather than *mar'eh* ("appearance"), though on the *nomen actionis* form *Qetilah* in mishnaic Hebrew, see *ibid*. On the Tannaitic innovation of *re'iyah* and *hagigah* and the lack of evidence for such terms and sacrifices in temple times, see Werman, "CD XI:17," esp. 210–12.

²¹ Compare *m. Pe'ah* 1:1. The obligation to sacrifice is based on "he/they shall not see me empty[-handed]" (Exodus 23:15; Deuteronomy 16:16).

²² *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma'el*, *Kaspa* 20 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 333). Unlike the *mishnah*'s list, women and slaves are missing from all mss.

the details of the pilgrimage ritual using typical exegetical reasoning, for example relying on the biblical specification of “males” to exempt women and of “feet” (*regalim*, which means both “feet” and “times,” “pilgrimage festivals”) to exempt the lame.²³ The precise contents of the *re'iyah* ritual are ambiguous. On the one hand, it involves seeing (hence “*re'iyah*” and the exemption of the blind). On the other hand, according to *m. Hagigah* 1:2, it has a monetary value; in other words, it is a sacrifice.²⁴ On both these components, seeing and of sacrifice, *t. Hagigah* 1:4 offers additional clarification.

The Tosefta seeks to define *re'iyah* by comparing it to other festival obligations. Its discussion places the relative values of the *hagigah* and *re'iyah* sacrifices in the context of a biblical instance of seeing God that is highly instructive:

The school of Shammai says: greater is the value of the *re'iyah* than the value of the *hagigah*; *re'iyah* is wholly for the most high [God], which is not the case with the *hagigah*.

The school of Hillel says: greater is the value of the *hagigah* than the value of the *re'iyah*; *hagigah* is applied before and after the revelation at Sinai, which is not the case with the *re'iyah*. . .

What is the *re'iyah*? These are the burnt offerings that accompany the *re'iyah*.²⁵

This parallels the debate between the schools of Shammai and Hillel in *m. Hagigah* 1:2. There, the positions were staked out in terms of minimum financial value (one or two coins for the *re'iyah* or *hagigah* offering). Here, the school of Shammai elevates the value of *re'iyah* over *hagigah* because the former is a burnt sacrifice, all of which is consumed by God, whereas the latter is not. Bet Hillel's claim bears scrutiny. Its claim is that *hagigah* must be of greater value because peace offerings were sacrificed before and after the revelation at Sinai, unlike *re'iyah* (burnt offerings).²⁶

²³ The *Mekhilta* exploits Deuteronomy 31:11 in order to exclude the deaf and converts. However, contrary to the inclusion of women and all minors in that passage, it still excludes women on the basis of *zechurekha* (“your males”) in the other three pilgrimage commands. This ambiguity of exclusion will continue into the talmudic texts. In the Yerushalmi, it is resolved by distinguishing between *re'iyat panim* (“seeing the face”) and the *qorban re'iyah* (“seeing sacrifice”). Whereas women are exempted from *re'iyah*, they are obligated in *simḥah*. See, e.g., *t. Hagigah* 1:4; *Sifre Deuteronomy* 138 (ed. Finkelstein, 193); Anderson, “Expression of joy.”

²⁴ See the Bavli's discussion of *re'iyah* and *re'ayon* (*b. Hagigah* 7a). ²⁵ *T. Hagigah* 1:4.

²⁶ See the extended discussion about the debate between Bet Hillel and Bet Shammai and the derivation of the values of *re'iyah* and *hagigah* in *b. Hagigah* 6a-b. *Y. Hagigah* 1:2, 76b identifies Exodus 5:1 (*veyahoggu*) as a pre-revelation instance of *hagigah*. See Exodus 24:5 (note Exodus 24:11) and Numbers 7:87–88. See Halivni, *Sources*, 579–83.

The post-revelation sacrifices, into which Bet Hillel reads these two rabbinic ritual sacrifices, are found a striking episode in the Exodus narrative. It combines both sacrifice and seeing:²⁷

And he sent young men of the people of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord . . .

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was a kind of paved work of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. Upon the nobles of the people of Israel he did not lay his hand; they gazed at God, and they ate and drank.²⁸

Thus, Bet Hillel derives the relative worth of *re'iyah* and *ḥagigah* from these biblical “precedents.”²⁹ This roots the notion of *re'iyah* as both sacrifice and seeing in the biblical text and further connects both aspects of the ritual.³⁰ However, the element of seeing is not exactly distinguished from that of sacrifice in the definition of *re'iyah* given at the end of *t. Ḥagigah* 1:4. In fact, the definition of *re'iyah* as “burnt offerings that accompany the *re'iyah*,” is somewhat circular.³¹

We learn more about the constituent elements of *re'iyah* from *t. Ḥagigah* 1:1.

A. The impure (*tame'*) is exempt from *re'iyah*, as it says, “and you shall come there” (Deuteronomy 12:5), “and you shall bring there” (Deuteronomy 12:6),³² [referring] to that which is *ra'uy* (“worthy,” lit. “seen”) to enter the courtyard (*azarah*), thus excluding the impure, who is not *ra'uy* to enter the courtyard.

B. R. Yoḥanan b. Dahabay³³ says in the name of R. Judah: Also the blind (*hasome*), as it says, “He shall see” (*yir'eh*, Exodus 34:23, et al.), thus excluding the blind.

²⁷ The Bavli reads this as prior to the Sinai revelation (*b. Ḥagigah* 6a). The debate between Bet Hillel and Bet Shammai concerns whether the *olot* mentioned in Exodus 24:5 were *re'iyah* or just regular burnt offerings.

²⁸ Exodus 24:5, 9–11.

²⁹ Thus, one coin for *re'iyah* and two for *ḥagigah*. Note that the sacrifice to and sighting of God takes place among an exclusive set, the biblical author having gone to some pains to emphasize the dangers of *hoi polloi* approaching the mountain by touch, or in order “to gaze” at God. See Exodus 23:12–13, 21–24 (in the latter, distinctions are made between common folk, priests, and Aaron and Moses); Exodus 24:1–2, 9–11.

³⁰ Ska, “Vision and meal.”

³¹ Furthermore, *t. Ḥagigah* 1:4 then goes on to muddy the waters even further, defining *ḥagigah* as a peace offering and then stating, “Both of these (*re'iyah* and *ḥagigah*) are called *ḥagigah*.”

³² Deuteronomy 12:5–6, “For only to the place that the Lord your God shall choose . . . and you shall come there. And you shall bring there your burnt offerings.”

³³ Ms. Vienna reads Yoḥanan b. Raḥabay, while Mss. Erfurt and London read Dahaba'y.

Rabbi responded [in disagreement] to the words of R. Yoḥanan b. Dahabay.

The sages supported the words of R. Judah. "And Hannah did not go up (1 Samuel 1:22)."

The Tosefta starts off by giving the basis for the exclusion of the impure person. It cites phrases in adjacent verses in Deuteronomy 12:5–6 that refer to "coming" (*uva'ta*, "you shall come") into the temple courtyard, in the rabbinic understanding, and to "bringing" (*vahave'tem*, "you shall bring") sacrifices.³⁴ The impure person is forbidden to *come into* the 'azarah, in order to see, and on this basis he is exempted from *bringing* the sacrifice. Likewise, the blind person who cannot *see* (*yir'eh*, in Exodus 34:23 and parallels) is exempted from the sacrifice. Or, more straightforwardly: the impure person is exempted from *re'iyah* (sacrifice or seeing) because he cannot, due to prohibition, enter the 'azarah where it takes place, and the blind person is exempted from *re'iyah* (seeing or sacrifice) because he cannot see. It is worth attending to the language used to express the disqualification of the *tame'*: the *tame'* is not *ra'uy*, literally, "not to be seen"; that is, he, along with others, ought not be seen in the courtyard (*en ra'uy*. . . *la'azarah*).³⁵ The blind person is excluded from *re'iyah* on the basis of his inability to see (*yir'eh*).

Aharon Shemesh takes the Tosefta's juxtaposition of the exclusion of the impure and the blind one step further, arguing that the *prohibition* underlying the exemption of the impure person also applies to the blind, as well as to the other excluded categories.³⁶ Shemesh concedes that in rabbinic law the "deformed" were not excluded from the sanctuary, in contrast to explicit biblical prohibitions against the presence of the blind, lame, uncircumcised, and impure (2 Samuel 5:8; Isaiah 52:1).³⁷ However, he argues, on the basis of additional suggestive rabbinic evidence, which has strong echoes in Qumranic sources, that in the case of *re'iyah* those whose bodies were not "esthetic" were *prohibited* from the ritual of seeing God.³⁸ Shemesh, along with Shlomo Naeh, Israel Knohl, and Yaakov Sussman, reads the rabbinic sources to suggest that the *re'iyah* actually took place

³⁴ The *Mekhilta*, above, cites "In front of (*lifne*) the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 16:11).

³⁵ See *t. Arakhin* 2:1: "A woman was never seen (*nir'et*) in the courtyard ('azarah) other than at the time of her sacrificing; and a minor was not seen (*nir'ah*) in the courtyard ('azarah) other than at the time that the Levites recited songs."

³⁶ Shemesh, "Holy angels."

³⁷ *M. Kelim* 1:8–9 has a series of exclusions that increase as the spaces come closer and closer to the holy of holies; cf. Shemesh, "Holy angels," 183–92.

³⁸ Shemesh, "Holy angels," 189.

in the priestly section of the courtyard, within the inner priestly court, between the hall and the altar (per *m. Kelim* 1:9), in which stringent exclusions applied (as per Leviticus 21:18–20).³⁹ These scholars read the evidence in order to uncover actual second temple pilgrimage practices and conflicts between Sadducee and Pharisee ideas about lay participation in the pilgrimage cult. Regardless of the value of these sources as repositories of pre-rabbinic traditions, they manifest rabbinic notions about pilgrimage past. In this regard, traditions such as *m. Hagigah* 3:8, which has priests warn pilgrims, “Take care, lest you touch the table [of the face-bread] and the menorah [and render it impure],” make it clear that the rabbis envisioned a ritual in which laity might reach far beyond their usual permissible terrain.⁴⁰

Shemesh’s observations, combined with the implication in *t. Hagigah* 1:1 that *re’iyah* took place in the *‘azarah*, and the statement in *t. ‘Arakhin* 2:1 that women were rarely seen in this part of the temple, suggests that perhaps all these exempted categories, including the blind, were at the very least discouraged (by lack of inclusion in the obligation), if not forbidden (as per Shemesh), from performing the component of *re’iyah* that entailed entry into the inner part of the priestly *‘azarah*.⁴¹ The foregoing discussion of the Tosefta should draw our attention to the important role of sight and visibility in the *re’iyah* ritual, as well as in shaping the ideal pilgrim through *halakhic* reasoning of exemption and exclusion.

Exemptive (or exclusionary) logic

In *t. Hagigah* 1:1, R. Yohanan b. Dahabay (like the *Mekhilta*) excludes the blind on the basis of a common type of exegetical reading of the words “he shall see” (Exodus 34:23, et al.).⁴² The *Sifre*, the Tannaitic legal-exegetical commentary on Deuteronomy, uses *yir’eh* for a different exegetical purpose, one that begins to explain the broader logic underlying the set of exemptions from *re’iyah* found in the rabbinic sources quoted above:

³⁹ Knohl, “Post-biblical sectarianism,” 139–42; Sussman, “History of the halakhah,” 65–68; Naeh, “*En em lamasoret*,” 401–48. According to *m. Kelim* 1:8, non-priests were allowed into the priestly court for laying their hands on animals dedicated to sacrifice and other related sacrificial rituals, but those with blemishes could not enter the area between the hall and the altar, or beyond.

⁴⁰ Shemesh, “Holy angels,” and Sussman, “History of the *halakhah*,” relate this to *m. Hagigah* 3:7.

⁴¹ Naeh, “*En em lamasoret*,” and Shemesh, “Holy angels.”

⁴² Note that in the Tosefta, Rabbi takes issue with this reading and argues that the correct reading should be in the passive, as in 1 Samuel 1:22, in which we also find the verb *ra’ah* (*r-’-h/y*) and *pene adonay*. For this interpretation of the Tosefta and parallel Mishnah, see Naeh, “*En em lamasoret*,” 415–17 (pace Lieberman).

“He [the pilgrim] will see the face of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 16:16) – just as he comes to see (*lir’ot*), so he comes to be seen (*lera’ot*).⁴³

The *Sifre* reads the word *yir’eh* not as a basis for the particular exclusion of one who cannot see but rather as the basis for a larger principle governing the ideal *re’iyah* pilgrim. Here is a principle of reciprocity that underlies the mechanics of *re’iyah* itself (and which does not concern sacrifice).⁴⁴ The principle can be articulated on two levels. On one level, we have the notion that *re’iyah* constitutes not just seeing (the plain meaning of the text) but also (on the basis of a *derashah* that transforms it into the passive) appearance.⁴⁵ The force of the *derashah* is to declare that just as the pilgrim goes to see God’s face (the verse’s plain meaning), so too is he a visual object to be seen by God. However, the *Sifre*’s statement also articulates a deeper and broader basis for reciprocity that explains the remainder of those exempted (or excluded): “just as (*kederekh*, ‘in the way that’) he comes to see, so (*kakh*, ‘in this way’) he comes to be seen.” This mandates a principle of reciprocity that goes beyond mutual vision, suggesting that something about the *way* that the pilgrim sees must also apply to his appearance. It is this broader principle of visual reciprocity, coupled with the Tannaitic anthropomorphic notion of God’s appearance (or its reverse, the notion of humanity as *imago dei*) that explains the “visible esthetic” standards for the pilgrim who goes to see God’s face.⁴⁶ Just as the pilgrim goes to see divine perfection, so ought he (ideally) to present a perfectly bodied appearance.

This dual principle of visual symmetry and reciprocity explains and undergirds the various requirements that follow: The pilgrim, as he draws close to the inner parts of the priestly courtyard must, like the priest, be unambiguously male and in full possession of his body parts and capacities, just like his divine object of vision.⁴⁷ This idealized, priestly notion of

⁴³ *Sifre Deuteronomy* 143 (ed. Finkelstein, 195–96). This double reading finds added support in the repetition of *yir’eh* in the verse adjacent to the one under examination (Deuteronomy 16:16, 17). This is the only one of the pilgrimage festival passages where *yir’eh* is found twice in succession. In the Exodus parallels, one finds *yir’eh* and then *lir’ot*. Here in Deuteronomy, the repetition, doubling, or reversal of *yir’eh* (i.e. from *yir’eh* to *yera’eh*) enacts the very principle of mirroring that it undergirds.

⁴⁴ This principle also explains why the pilgrim must be male and sound of body, senses, and reason.

⁴⁵ Naeh, “*En em lamasoret*,” suggests that the midrash may actually invoke Exodus 23:17, the one case in which the verb *yera’eh* is convincingly *niphal*.

⁴⁶ Shemesh, “Holy angels,” 188–90; Lorberbaum, *Image of God*.

⁴⁷ In the *Sifre*’s exegesis, blindness need not even be stated, because the entire enterprise has already been predicated on the notion that the pilgrim sees. The *Sifre* continues: “‘Your males’ – to exclude women. ‘All your males’ – to include minors.” Cf. the debate between the schools of Hillel and Shammai about the definition of minor in this context (in *m. Hagigah* 1:1 and *t. Hagigah* 1:2). The suggestion that these exemptions have prohibitory force is challenged by *Mekhila Derabbi*

human–divine encounter is partially reflected in the *Mekhilta*'s claim that there were no blind, lame, deaf, or mentally disabled among the Israelites gathered at the Sinai revelation.⁴⁸

In summarizing the patterns at play in the Tannaitic sources on the thrice-yearly visit to see God's face, we can note the following trends: the emphasis on the visual aspect of the encounter (beginning with the creation and nominalization of *re'iyah* as a technical term for a specific ritual); the move toward ritualizing *re'iyah* by the institution of a sacrificial component (also called the *re'iyah*); an expansion from unidirectional vision to visual reciprocity; and a consequent expansion of the ritual focus from the pilgrim's vision to his appearance. There is still ambiguity in the Tannaitic sources as to the differences (if any) between the sacrificial and visual components of *re'iyah* and the differential legal obligation, exemption, and exclusion for each. Finally, the sources in their exemptions (or exclusions) promote an ideal pilgrim who sees (and is seen by) God: one who reflects the deity in whose image he is created.

Babylonian Re'iyah

As noted, the desire to gaze at God's face was no invention of the Tannaim; nor was the desire to be seen by God.⁴⁹ The Bible, among other ancient Near Eastern texts, speaks of the human desire to see God's face and depicts God's face and eyes being turned toward or away from humanity. God's countenance is said to shine toward humans or to be "set against" or "turned away from" them; God's eyes scan all of humanity.⁵⁰

Yishma'el, Pasha 17 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 68), which states that Jonah's wife made pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but this may point to the sacrificial element of pilgrimage (the *ḥagigah* and *re'iyah* sacrifices) rather than the visual component of *re'iyah*. *Mekhilta* there also states that Michal the Cushite and Tabi, Rabban Gamaliel's servant, donned *tefillin*, phylacteries, which obviously points to exceptional cases in which *exempted* categories nonetheless perform positive, time-bound mitsvot.

⁴⁸ *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma'el, Bahodesh* 9 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 235). This principle is only partially reflected here, since women are not excluded from the Sinai revelation, though as mentioned above, there are graduated levels of exclusion and inclusion depending on status and proximity to the sacred. Shemesh notes that the gathering of so many excluded (or exempted) categories (gender: woman, *tumtum*, androgyne; body: blind, lame, deaf-mute; mental capacity: the mentally incompetent, minor; status: slave, woman, minor), to which the *Sifre* adds converts, is relatively unusual. The three Tannaitic instances in which one finds significant overlap are all in priestly contexts: (a) exclusions of priests (Leviticus 21:18–20, *m. Bekhorot* 7), (b) exclusions of sacrificial animals (Leviticus 22:21–24; *m. Bekhorot* 6), and (c) *m. Menahot* 9:8. Cf. *m. Kelim* 1:9. Shemesh notes the overlaps between these exclusions, the *re'iyah* exemptions and those in 1QSa 2:3:9 (Shemesh, "Holy angels").

⁴⁹ Psalms 34:6, 9.

⁵⁰ On God's eyes and face toward the righteous and against the wicked, see Psalms 34:16–17. On the desire for God's face to radiate toward his worshippers, see Numbers 6:24–26; Psalms 44:4. On

Where early Palestinian rabbis were innovative was in their extrapolation from the few biblical verses on seeing God's face thrice a year to a pilgrimage ritual that emphasized human and (in the case of the *Sifre*) divine vision. This is a move, taken up later by Babylonian rabbis, toward the kind of "ritual-centered viewing" or "mystic viewing" that emerged in the Roman East in the second century CE. Jaś Elsner uses these terms to describe the climactic moment of pilgrimage, in which the devotee and deity share a "reciprocal gaze."⁵¹ Yet, for the rabbis, unlike for adherents of other gods, there was no temple and thus no contemporary *re'iyah*, so this seeing took place on a purely imaginary, exegetical level. We will treat the implications of these different types of vision and their concomitant visual objects (material and mental) at the end of the next chapter.

Some centuries later, in Babylonia, we find visual reciprocity elaborated and celebrated in terms of ocular reciprocity. The opening *sugya* in *b. Hagigah* (which comments on *m. Hagigah* 1:1) suggests that a person who is blind in only one eye might be allowed to do *re'iyah*.⁵² It then rebuts this suggestion as follows:

R. Yoḥanan b. Dahabay said in the name of R. Judah:

One who is blind in one eye is exempt from *re'iyah*, as it says, *yir'eh* ("he will see"), *yera'eh* ("he will be seen")⁵³ – just as he comes to see, so he comes to be seen;⁵⁴ as he comes to see with both eyes, so [he comes] to be seen with both eyes.⁵⁵

the removal of God's face, see Deuteronomy 31:18, 32:20; Isaiah 59:2; Ezekiel 39:23–24. On the expression "see the face of PN" in Akkadian texts in cultic contexts, see *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, vol. 1, A, part 2, 21–22.

⁵¹ Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 23–24. This is one way to understand the rabbinic prohibition against looking at idols. I expand this argument in Chapter 5.

⁵² The Yerushalmi does not contemplate this possibility.

⁵³ Compare *t. Hagigah* 1:1, "R. Yoḥanan b. Dahabay said in the name of R. Judah: Also the blind (*basome*), as it says, 'He shall see (*yir'eh*, Exodus 34:23, et al.),' thus excluding the blind."

⁵⁴ Compare *Sifre Deuteronomy* 143 (ed. Finkelstein, 195–96). Note that Mss. Göttingen 3 (at 2a and 4b), Oxford-Bodl. heb. d. 63 (2826) 28–30, Cambridge T-S F1 (2) 29, and Oxford Opp. Add. fol. 23 have *kederekh sheba' lir'ot/lera'ot kakh ba' liro't/lera'ot* (the text is unvocalized), whereas Munich 6 (2a and 4b), London-BL Harl. 4408 (400)(4b), Munich 95 (*b. 'Arakhin* 2b), Vatican 171, Vatican 134, Oxford 370 (*b. 'Arakhin* 2b), T-SF1(1).87 and Spanish Printo (2a and 4b) have *kederekh sheba' lir'ot kakh ba' lira'ot* (= *lehira'ot*). Jerusalem – Yad Harav Herzog 1 actually has *lehera'ot* (once, and another which is a doubtful reading). Geiger, *Nachgelassene schriften*, vol. v, 108–9, argues that the Babylonian Amoraim here are struggling to understand what R. Judah (in the Tosefta) is adding to the plain meaning of the Mishnah. In other words, from the Mishnah it is already obvious and stated that the blind person is excluded. R. Judah is taken to be expanding the exclusion even to the case of one who is blind in one eye, with the proof-text provided because they were not aware of changes in vocalization.

⁵⁵ *B. Hagigah* 2a, 4b (parallels in *b. Sanhedrin* 4b, *b. 'Arakhin* 2b). In the first instance (*b. Hagigah* 2a), the double *yir'eh* is brought by the editor incidentally in a series of similar hypotheticals which all involve borderline cases (half-slave, half-blind, lame on the first day but healthy on the second).

The rebuttal is achieved by bringing contains elements a Tannaitic teaching which of both the Tosefta and the *Sifre*.⁵⁶ The *Sifre*'s symmetrical principle of visuality, "just as he comes to see (*lir'ot*) so he comes to be seen (*lera'ot*)," referred there both to reciprocal vision and to a similar manner or content of seeing.⁵⁷ The Babylonian Talmud, in adding "with both eyes," converts it into a hyper-reflexive and literal principle that refers to the very organs of sight themselves.⁵⁸

The Babylonian principle of symmetry shapes the very form of the exegesis; on the basis of this principle the human body should (ideally) mirror the perfection of the divine body. This principle of symmetry makes the hermeneutic of visuality transparent: Not only does like see like, but each is alike in its very seeing (of the other), down to the eyes themselves. The effect is what we can call a "homovisual" encounter: The two eyes of two similar, perfectly bodied males, albeit one human and the other divine, meet each other. I define homovisuality as a type of viewing that is *homos*, in the sense of "same" or "like." This refers to seeing that takes place between like entities, or that produces like visual content, or that has the effect of engendering sameness (and thus mirroring), whether in terms of the viewers or the visual object.⁵⁹ In the act of viewing itself there is a mimetic effect.

It is worth repeating that this type of homovisual or mirroring vision is accomplished here in specifically ocular terms. The eye, after all, is a body part or visual object that "stares back" at its viewer.⁶⁰ Unlike the leg or the hand, it is an organ that, when viewed, can reciprocate and return the gaze. It is the visual object that is also visual subject.⁶¹

The Talmud runs through such cases to get at the extent of inclusion expressed in the Mishnah's *bakol* ("all").

⁵⁶ *T. Hagigah* 1:1 and *Sifre Deuteronomy* 143 (ed. Finkelstein, 195–96). It is, of course, always possible that the Bavli had access to a (completely) different tradition than that preserved in the *midreshe halakhah* and the Tosefta. See Dikdukei Sofrim, ad loc; Halivni, *Sources*, 578; Ms. Vatican 134 (cf. *b. Hagigah* 4b).

⁵⁷ The *Sifre* bases its *derashah* on Deuteronomy 16:16; Naeh sees the *derashah* in the Bavli as invoking Exodus 34:23 ("will see") and Exodus 24:14 ("will appear"). Cf. Ta-Shma, "One who is blind."

⁵⁸ Just before the citation of this tradition in *b. Hagigah* 4b, the Bavli treats the exclusion of the impure person under the principle of "all that there is in 'bringing' there is in 'coming'" and vice versa. This renders the similar mirroring reasoning between the case of the impure (bringing, coming) and the blind (seeing, seen) far more transparent than in the earlier sources. Cf. *t. Hagigah* 1:1.

⁵⁹ This visual "sameness" could be along the lines of gender, bodily appearance, ethnicity, etc., in which like sees like, or in which the seeing has a mimetic, mirroring effect. Homovisuality could include homoeroticism, but need not. I distinguish my use of homovisuality and heterovisuality from the way it is currently used in queer theory and film studies, in which it is opposed to visual regimes that represent straightness and heterosexuality as normative. In my use, it could include such oppositional regimes, but need not. For gendered and sexualized notions of homo- and heterovisuality, see Veri, "Homophobic discourse," and Veri, Wiegman, and Zwinger, "Tonya's bad boot."

⁶⁰ Elkins, *The Object Stares Back*.

⁶¹ This is, of course, culturally and historically variable. Other things in the world could be understood to reciprocate the gaze, in addition to the human eye.

This extension of visuality to two eyes and their mirrored doubling in the Bavli is also a move toward a more explicit anthropomorphic literalism in the divine–human encounter of *re'iyah*, and it conjures a surprisingly intimate interaction of two entities looking into each other's eyes. Indeed, as we will see, much of *b. Hagigah*, within which this passage is located, mourns the loss of this intimacy. Through a blend of narrative and exegesis, the Babylonian rabbis in effect compose an extended elegy for the loss of God's face. And, as I hope to show, having constructed a past tethered to such a precious visuality between human and deity, they frame a present that is heavily informed by the visual asymmetry that divine absence effects.

A similar experience of reciprocal vision, emerging with the Tannaim, and taken up fully by the Babylonian Amoraim, is described with great vividness by the fourth-century Roman emperor Julian, who talks not only of the delight that the pilgrim experiences while looking at images of the gods, but also of the shuddering awe when he feels “the gods looking at him.”⁶² He evokes the physical and affective power of gazing at and being gazed at by the gods, comparing the delight in looking at images of the gods to the delight in looking at images of parents, children, or the emperor. His point is as much about visual pleasure in general as it is about the potential and power of such pleasure when looking at *images*. Indeed, for the Platonizing Julian, it is important that the images are distinguished from the gods themselves, who are ultimately “unseen.” By contrast, here the homovisuality of the Babylonian Talmud's *re'iyah* is an unmediated one.⁶³ God does not appear through images or objects, but eye to eye, as is emphasized by the double reading of *r-ʿh*.⁶⁴ The Babylonian and late-antique pagan understandings of human–divine “mystic viewing” do share the sense of their heightened affect at the exchange of gazes, whether in terms of pleasure or awe.⁶⁵

⁶² Julian, *Oration on the Mother of the Gods* 294c–d (with minor alterations to the translation of Wright, *Works of Emperor Julian*, vol. II, 310–11). I treat this again below (p. 178).

⁶³ Such a distinction, between direct seeing and seeing through images, is not obvious, nor is it the only way in which the Babylonian and later Palestinian rabbis imagined human–divine visuality. We will later discuss the parallel existence of what I will call a “heterovisual” way of seeing God, in which images or material representations are crucial to the experience. This mode was not imagined to effect a reciprocal gaze.

⁶⁴ God is described as having revealed himself “visible eye to eye” (*ʿayin beʿayin nirʾah*) to Israel (Numbers 14:14); a similar idiom is used regarding watchers (*sofim*) (Isaiah 52:8).

⁶⁵ For other accounts of reciprocal vision, we have Pliny's description of a painting of Athena who looks back at the spectator from all angles (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 35.37) and Lucian's account of an image of Hera that looks back at the viewer from wherever he is (Lucian, *De Syria Dea*, 32). See the explanation for this phenomenon in Ptolemy, *Optics* II, 133. On reciprocal vision, see Elsner, *Roman Eyes* and Francis, “Living icons.”

In the next section we pause to look at the lack of an Amoraic Palestinian visual reciprocity as it pertains to *re'iyah* after which we return to *b. Hagigah*. We then examine key moments in this tractate that relate to the loss of pilgrimage homovisuality (*b. Hagigah* 4b again, *b. Hagigah* 5a–b, 3b).⁶⁶

Re'iyah in the eyes of the Palestinian Amoraim

To better contextualize the Babylonian rabbis' understanding of *re'iyah* in terms of reciprocal vision, it is useful to examine and briefly compare how the Palestinian Amoraic sources treat the earlier Tannaitic understandings of *re'iyah*.⁶⁷ Perhaps most striking is the fact that the notion of visual reciprocity, first evidenced in the *Sifre* and sharpened in the *Bavli*, fails to appear in the *Yerushalmi*. Rather, we'll see that the *Yerushalmi* (edited in the late fourth to early fifth century) deploys the double reading of *yir'eh* (*yir'eh*, Qal; *yera'eh*, Niphal) alongside a parallel principle of "he shall come (*ba'ah*, Qal) . . . he shall bring (*mevi'*, Hiphil)," in order to posit a relationship between the obligation or ability to see/come and to appear/bring.⁶⁸ This concern to find a relationship between the capacity to enter and to see and the obligation to bring and to sacrifice reflects the Palestinian Talmud's position that there are two separable components of *re'iyah*: seeing the face (*re'iyat panim*, or *re'ayon*) and an accompanying sacrifice (*re'iyat qorban* or *qorban re'iyah*).

"All are obligated in *re'iyah*, etc." [except for the deaf-mute, the mentally incompetent, the minor, the hermaphrodite, the androgyne, women, slaves who are not freed, the lame, the blind, the sick, and the old person who cannot ascend with his feet.] (*m. Hagigah* 1:1)

The *mishnah* refers to *rei'yat qorban* (seeing of the sacrifice), but for *re'iyat panim* (seeing of the face) even a minor is obligated, as it says, "Gather the people: the men, the women, and the children" (Deuteronomy 31:12)⁶⁹

The *Yerushalmi* here declares that the exemptions of *m. Hagigah* 1:1 apply to the sacrificial component of *re'iyah*, but not to the visual component.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ The key moments pertaining to visibility in the tractate include: *b. Hagigah* 2a (*yir'eh*, *yera'eh* exegesis); *b. Hagigah* 3b (R. Eli'ezer blinds R. Yose b. Durmasqit for failing to honor him); *b. Hagigah* 4b (second instance of the *yir'eh*, *yera'eh* exegesis followed by *re'iyah*-related exegetical narratives); *b. Hagigah* 5a–b; *b. Hagigah* 11a–16a (elaboration of gazing upon the *merkavah*, God's chariot); and *b. Hagigah* 26b (pilgrimage display, which we examine in the next chapter).

⁶⁷ For a Palestinian rabbinic exegesis that describes the divine gaze upon Israel as two-eyed when they fulfill his will and monocular when they do not, see *Song of Songs Rabbah* 8:12.

⁶⁸ *Y. Hagigah* 1:1, 76b.

⁶⁹ *Y. Hagigah* 1:1, 75b.

⁷⁰ See *t. 'Arakhin* 2:1.

However, even a minor is obligated to do *re'iyat panim*, based on Deuteronomy 31:12.⁷¹ Does the Yerushalmi's citation of this verse mean that *all* those obligated to gather for the septennial recitation of the Torah (*haqhel*) are also obligated to perform *re'iyat panim*? In other words, does the Yerushalmi's use of "even" (*afillu*) regarding the minor mean, on the basis of Deuteronomy 31:12, that women and perhaps all the other categories excluded in the Mishnah are also obligated to see?⁷² This conclusion is unlikely, since the Yerushalmi has no trouble using Deuteronomy 31:12 for both inclusive and exclusive purposes as it continues in its discussion of the mishnaic exclusions.⁷³ Additionally, Deuteronomy 31:12 fails to speak to the other exempted categories of *m. Hagigah* 1:1.

Elsewhere, the Yerushalmi seems at pains to imply that even if women were not prohibited from pilgrimage-related obligation, they were discouraged from fulfilling it.⁷⁴ Here (in the case of Jonah's wife going up for pilgrimage) it seems, at least according to the view of one Palestinian Amora (R. Abbahu), that exemption (at least in the case of women) does imply prohibition (of sorts) and that even on the view of the remainder, the fact of this mention may imply that such prohibition is conceivable.

In the Yerushalmi, the conceptual and terminological distinction between seeing God's face and offering the "seeing sacrifice" implies differential obligation (and in some cases perhaps exclusion), even as the parameters of each are unclear.⁷⁵ While the Yerushalmi reads *m. Hagigah* 1:1 and its exclusions to pertain to *re'iyat qorban*, it nonetheless does not clearly spell out obligation for all in the case of *re'iyat panim*, and other

⁷¹ This ignores the terms of debate between the schools of Hillel and Shammai in *m. Hagigah* 1:1 that are about the physical and visual element of *re'iyah*, rather than only its sacrificial component.

⁷² *Sifre Deuteronomy* 143 (ed. Finkelstein, 196) obligates the minor (whether for sacrifice or vision is not distinguished): "Your males' (Deuteronomy 16:16) – to exclude women. 'All your males' – to include minors (*lehavi' et haqetanim*).” The *Sifre* then recasts the Mishnah's debate between the schools of Hillel and Shammai in terms of the minimum qualification for minority status.

⁷³ The Yerushalmi reads Deuteronomy 31:12 selectively, excluding the deaf and mute based on the continuation of the verse, "so they may hear and so they may learn" (though it could have used this phrase to include women). Note that the exclusion of the mentally incompetent is based on "It has been clearly shown (*hor'eta*) to you" (Deuteronomy 4:35) (*y. Hagigah* 1:1, 76a).

⁷⁴ *Y. Berakhot* 2:2(3), 4c (parallels in *y. Erubin* 10:1, 26a; *Pesqita Rabbati* 22 [ed. Friedmann, 112b]): "Mikhal the daughter of the Cushite wore tefillin [and] Jonah's wife went up for pilgrimage, and the sages did not object. [R. Hizkiyya in the name of R. Abbahu: the wife of Jonah was sent back, and the sages objected to Michal.]" So Leiden, cf. Vatican. In *y. Berakhot*, questions about the exemption of women from the obligation of tefillin and pilgrimage are placed amidst considerations of circumstances in which the wearing of tefillin might be prohibited. Compare the opposition to Jonah's wife's performance of pilgrimage in Palestinian Amoraic sources to *b. Erubin* 96a and *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma'el, Pasha* 17 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 68).

⁷⁵ The Yerushalmi considers the possibility of particular categories who have the obligation to send their sacrifice via third parties (if they are unable to "come" and do *re'iyat panim*).

evidence suggests that some rabbis viewed extra-obligatory participation in pilgrimage cult as problematic. This comes close to Shemesh's argument about the *de facto* prohibitory nature of the exemption in *m. Hagigah* 1:1 and related sources.

The formal division between seeing the face and sacrificing also makes sense of some of the ambiguities we noted in the Tannaitic materials. One implication of the distinction is clarified elsewhere in the Yerushalmi:

These are the things that do not have a fixed quantity: the leaving of corners of the field for the poor, the first-fruit offerings, the seeing (*re'ayon*), acts of kindness and Torah study (*m. Pe'ah* 1:1).

“The *re'ayon*” – the *mishnah* refers to *re'iyat panim* (seeing of the face), but *re'iyat qorban* (seeing sacrifice) does have a fixed amount.⁷⁶

Here we are told that there is no limit to “seeing the face.” Compare this to the disputes about the relative worths of the *re'iyah* and *hagigah* sacrifices in *m. Hagigah* 1:2. Of course, *m. Pe'ah* 1:1 is not strictly, or solely, about quantity in the narrow pecuniary sense. The overall message of the Mishnah is that the items listed are infinitely valuable acts that ought to be endlessly pursued. The Palestinian Talmud makes sure that we understand that one among such experiences is seeing God's face (rather than sacrificing).

The categories of exclusion from the obligation of *re'iyat qorban* treated in the Yerushalmi are exempted by virtue of their inability or unsuitability to perform *re'iyat panim* in terms of their aesthetic visibility. Thus, the Yerushalmi cites a subtly different reading of the double *yir'eh* from that of the *Sifre* or the Bavli: “R. Illa says: ‘He shall see’ (*yir'eh*), ‘he shall appear’ (*yera'eh*) – he who is fit for coming brings (*hara'uy lavo' mevi*), and he who is not fit does not bring.”⁷⁷ In other words, one who cannot come

⁷⁶ *Y. Pe'ah* 1:1, 15a. The two terms, *panim* and *qorban*, are reversed in Ms. Leiden, though the editors of the Academy of Hebrew Language edition mark it as a problematic reading. For a Babylonian discussion of the meaning of *re'ayon* versus *re'iyah* that cites *m. Pe'ah* 1:1, see *b. Hagigah* 7a.

⁷⁷ *Y. Hagigah* 1:1, 76b. This is a version of the *Sifre*'s principle of reciprocity that is wedded to the parallelistic principle of exclusion we saw in *t. Hagigah* 1:1 in relation to the impure. The term of exclusion, not being “fit” (*ra'uy*), is the perfect participle of the root *r'-h* (“to see”). My understanding is that rather than a *derashah* on alternate vocalizations of the word *yir'eh* in the three biblical passages (Exodus 23, Exodus 34, and Deuteronomy 16), the rabbis in these *derashot* are, as Naeh argues for the *Sifre*, focusing on the repetition of the root *r'-h* in Exodus 34:23 and Exodus 23:17 (the former is convincingly Qal, the latter is convincingly Niphal); cf. the repetition of *b-w-* in Deuteronomy 12:5–6 (Qal and Hiphil, respectively). The Mishnah uses the term *ra'uy* to describe the aesthetic, bodily fitness of various things that come into contact with the cult. So, sacrificial animals become sanctified by contact with cultic objects such as the altar's ramp or cult vessels, but only if they are “*ra'uy lo*” or “*ra'uy lahem*.” See *m. Zevachim* 9:1, 12:1, 13:8, 14:1; *t. Bava Metsi'a* 9:3. See *y. Hagigah* 1:1, 76a for R. Ze'ira's use of the same formula as a basis for the continuation of the obligation to perform *re'iyah* on the first day of the festival throughout the remainder of the festival. On aesthetic terminology and the term *ra'uy*, see Leiter, “Worthiness.”

into the temple (in order to do *re'iyat panim*) is exempted from bringing (his *qorban re'iyah*).⁷⁸ According to one opinion, those with boils or polyps are exempted on the basis of Deuteronomy 31:12, "When all Israel come to see (*lir'ot*)," being deemed unworthy or literally not seeable, "for they are not fit (*re'uyin*) to come with all of Israel."⁷⁹ Here, the notion of being "fit" or "regarded" (*ra'uy*) is tied into seeing (*re'iyah*), and from seeing it is connected to bringing the *re'iyah* sacrifice. The formulae and phrases used by the Bavli to construct the reciprocal dynamics of vision are used by the Yerushalmi to emphasize and construct a standard of aesthetic visibility.

This summary of the Palestinian Talmud's treatment of the visual aspects of *re'iyah* is not exhaustive. In the next chapter we will look at further instances in *y. Hagigah* that say more about *what* was seen. What we have surveyed so far reveals that *y. Hagigah* focuses on the eligibility of the viewers (or sacrificers) rather than on the relational dynamics of the seeing itself (as in the Bavli). We shall see in the next chapter that to the extent that the Yerushalmi deals with the seeing itself, it is hesitant about the notion of seeing God's face directly, imagining instead visual objects that stood in for God's face. On both counts, this is a far cry from the Bavli. This is not to say that we do not find evidence of desire for reciprocal human–divine vision in other Palestinian texts. In *Pesiqta Derav Kahana*, we have one such instance, vividly set at Sinai:

R. Levi said: "The Holy One, Blessed Be He, was visible to them as an icon (*ikonin*) with faces [that could be seen] from every place (*mikkol maqom*); a thousand humans were gazing at it (*mebbitin bah*), and it was gazing (*mabbetet*) at all of them. So when the Holy One Blessed Be He would speak, every single one of Israel would say, 'To me the Word speaks.'"⁸⁰

This teaching about the divine gaze and address is attributed to the fourth-century Amora R. Levi. In R. Levi's eyes, not only does an icon (*multifrons*) of the Jewish God "stare back," but it also addresses each spectator. The midrash uses visual and artistic idioms that Julian, Pliny, and Lucian would have recognized – this is the dream of the (divine) image that looks back at its viewers. This notion does not enter the Palestinian visual lexicon surrounding pilgrimage until a century or so later (as per our citation from *Pesiqta Rabbati* at the head of this chapter). Furthermore, this Amoraic

⁷⁸ Hence the impure person is exempted from sacrifice because of his exclusion from entry into the *'azarah*.

⁷⁹ *y. Hagigah* 1:1 76a. This exclusion rests on the extraction of a fitness (*re'uyin*) requirement alluded to in the prescription in Deuteronomy 31:12 that all Israel "come to see (*lir'ot*)."

⁸⁰ *Pesiqta Derav Kahana* 12:25 (ed. Mandelbaum, 1:224).

midrash safely set at the one-time revelation at Sinai imagines divine visibility to occur, unlike the Bavli, via the mediating imagery of an image (*ikon*). The visual encounter it contemplates may be emphatically personal but it is not direct. And it is set in biblical history rather than as part of a pilgrimage ritual that is hopefully to be restored.

Remembrance of sights past: losing face in the Babylonian Talmud

Having followed the different path taken by the Yerushalmi, we now return to the Babylonian conceptions of *re'iyah*, tracing the key narrative-exegetical moments in *b. Hagigah*. The following anecdotal and affective exegesis serves as a poignant example of how Babylonian rabbis represented their own complex of desirous and mournful feelings for the lost pilgrimage encounter.

Rav Huna wept when he came across the following biblical text, “He shall see” (*yir'eh*), “He shall be seen” (*yera'eh*).⁸¹

He said: a servant whose master (*rabbo*) expects (*metsappe*)⁸² to see him (*lir'oto*), shall he distance himself from him? As it says, “When you come to see my face (*lir'ot panay*), who asked you to trample my courtyards?” (Isaiah 1:12)⁸³

Rav Huna, a third-century Babylonian Amora, reads scripture and weeps. This anecdote (*b. Hagigah* 4b) heads a string of thirteen such cases in the Bavli *sugya* (*b. Hagigah* 4b–5a). Almost all of them lament Jewish loss and punishment in the wake of the temple's destruction.

Rav Huna's lament is placed immediately after a second occurrence of the *baraita* of R. Yohanan b. Dahabay, discussed above, which reads the doubling of *yir'eh*, *yere'ah* to exclude a pilgrim who is blind in one eye from performing *re'iyah*. The juxtaposition of this *baraita*, which I have argued above is one of the Bavli's clearest statements of the importance of visual reciprocity, with the story of Rav Huna's weeping, invites the reader to connect the two and to read Rav Huna's tears as a lament for the loss of

⁸¹ Here, the double *yir'eh* points backwards to the previous exegesis about reciprocal vision. Coupled with master–slave imagery, it is enhanced here, as it undermines the expected hierarchy of roles between slave and master, humanity and God. This imagery continues through several of the fourteen similar traditions that follow in the Bavli of sages weeping when they encounter certain biblical verses.

⁸² The use of *metsappe* plays on the connotations of the root *ts-f-h* which has the meaning of gazing or looking (Qal) and the more metaphorical meaning of looking forward or anticipating (Piel).

⁸³ *B. Hagigah* 4b (y. *hagigah* 2:1, 77a).

this reciprocal vision. Indeed, Rav Huna's tears are occasioned by reading this statement of reciprocity – *yir'eh, yera'eh* – in the context of the verse from Isaiah, which retracts the promised intimacy (“When you come to see my face, who asked you to trample my courtyards”).⁸⁴ The master's eager expectation both to see and to be seen is rescinded in Isaiah,⁸⁵ and as a result, the ocular intimacy of the temple era is replaced by a reality in which God disdains Israel's sacrifices and cultic worship.⁸⁶

Let us return to the observation that the *baraita* on 4b, which establishes the *yir'eh, yera'eh* reading, is the second occurrence of this text, which first appears on 2a. This goes to the clear thematic flow of the tractate's editorial arrangement, through which the motif of seeing God's face is threaded. In other words, the Bavli, after finishing its discussion of all the mishnaic categories excluded from the obligation of *re'iyah* (on 2a), reiterates this particular *baraita* (on 4b).⁸⁷ Then after the reading of *yir'eh/yera'eh* as a requirement that two pairs of eyes behold each other during the *re'iyah* ritual, the Bavli launches into a sequence of thirteen anecdotes about rabbis who come across a certain biblical passage and weep, beginning with Rav Huna (on 4b), and including God, who weeps over the destruction of Jerusalem. It then follows with a quartet of exegetical narratives (on 5a–b). In these narratives, the Babylonian Talmud moves from despair about the lack of access to God's face to the implications of God's absence in

⁸⁴ The juxtaposition of the verse from Isaiah with that from Exodus effects an ingenious rhetorical inversion. The invitation to see God's face in Exodus 23:17: “All your males shall see the face (*yir'eh et pene*) of the Lord, God” is mocked by Isaiah 1:12: “When you come to see my face (*lir'ot panay*), who asked you to come?” Similarly, the foot festival, “Three festivals (*regalim*, lit. “feet”) a year you shall celebrate for me” (Exodus 23:14) is disparaged as a “trampling of courtyards” (*remos hatseray*). Contrast with *b. Hagiga* 3a: “Rava explains: ‘How beautiful are your feet in sandals, daughter of nobles!’ (Song of Songs 7:2) – How beautiful are the feet of Israel at the hour when they make pilgrimage by foot.” See parallels in *b. Sukkah* 49b; *b. Mo'ed Qatan* 16a; and versions in *Genesis Rabbah* 43:9 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 1:423–24) and *Song of Songs Rabbah* 7:3. In Isaiah 1:15, God's rejection of Israel is described in specifically visual terms: “I shall turn my eyes from you (*a'lim 'enay mikkem*).”

⁸⁵ This is echoed by the ambiguity of the subject and objects of the verbs in Rav Huna's analogy: “A servant whose master expects to see him (*metsappe lo lir'oto*), shall he distance himself from him (*yitraheq mimmennu*)?” The master's expectation could refer to his own beholding of the slave, or to the slave coming to look at him (the master). There may be similar ambiguity about the subject of *yitraheq mimmennu*.

⁸⁶ Though there is still intimacy in the language of dominance and subordination (servant–master) in Isaiah 1:12. The phrase *lir'ot panay* (“to see my face”) is another instance in which the Masoretic Text renders the verb in the passive, *lera'ot*. *Targum of Jonathan* has *le'ithaza'ah qodamay* (“to be seen before me”), but the Peshitta has *lemehze appe* (“to see my face”).

⁸⁷ This comes as commentary on the *tanu rabbanan*, which picks up tangentially on the mention of *tame* in the discussion of *'arel* brought in right at the end.

contemporary terms. This arrangement transitions from loss to consolation to defensiveness to optimism:

- (1) “My anger shall be kindled against them on that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face from them [and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them]” (Deuteronomy 31:17). Rav Bardela b. Tavyumi said in the name of Rav: To whomever “hiding of the face” does not apply is not one of them [the people of Israel]; to whomever [the words] “and they shall be devoured” does not apply is not one of them.
- (2) The rabbis said to Rava: Neither “the hiding of the face,” nor “and they shall be devoured” applies to [our] teacher [i.e. to Rava]. He said to them: Do you know how much I secretly send to the court of King Shapur?⁸⁸ Even so, the rabbis set their eyes upon him. Meanwhile the court of King Shapur sent [men] who plundered him. He said: So it is taught, Rabban Shim’on b. Gamaliel said: Wherever the rabbis direct their eyes there is either death or poverty.
- (3) “And I will hide my face on that day” (Deuteronomy 31:17). Rava said: The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “Although I hide my face from them, ‘I shall speak to him in a dream’” (Numbers 12:6). Rav Joseph said: His hand is stretched over us, as it is said: “And I have covered you in the shadow of my hand” (Isaiah 51:16).
- (4) R. Joshua b. Hananyah was at the court of Caesar. A certain *min* showed him [by gestures]: A people whose Lord has turned his face from them. [R. Joshua] showed him: His hand is stretched over us.⁸⁹ Caesar said to R. Joshua: What did he show you? [R. Joshua replied:] “A people whose Lord has turned his face from them,” and I showed him, “His hand is stretched over us.” They said to the heretic: What did you show him? [The heretic replied:] “A people whose Lord has turned his face from them.” [They asked:] And what did he show you? [He replied:] “I do not know.” They said: Should a man who does not understand what they show him by gesture sign before the king! They took him out and killed him.⁹⁰

As this passage and the preceding fourteen vignettes of weeping and mourning demonstrate, the rabbis understood divine inaccessibility as a punishment whose effects need to be understood as much as they were bitterly

⁸⁸ Cf. Rava and tax evasion in *b. Nedarim* 62b.

⁸⁹ The heretic’s statement is given in Aramaic, but is based on Deuteronomy 31:17. R. Joshua’s Hebrew response, *yado netuyah ‘alenu*, is the same expression used above in Rav Joseph’s statement as an explanation of the quote from Isaiah 51:16.

⁹⁰ *B. Hagigah* 5a–b. While the printed edition, Vilna, has *apikoros*, the manuscripts have *habu mina* (Göttingen 3; Munich 6; Oxford-Bodl. heb. d. 63 (2826) 30b; London-BL Harl. 5508 (400); Munich 95; Oxford Opp. Add. fol. 23; Presaro Print (1514); Venice Print (1521); Vatican 171; Vatican 134; Spanish Print (ca. 1480) as per Lieberman database). Given the content and context, it is likely that *min* was censored in the printed edition.

felt. The words of Augustine strike at the same affective nexus: “If your heart shuddered at what has just been said, that God will deny you the sight of his face, it means that you accounted not seeing your God as a terrible punishment; it means you have loved freely.”⁹¹ The deeper the affective response to the loss of God’s face, the deeper the love – hence the tears shed in the preceding material.

However, the rabbis would have walked a fine line between their understanding of God’s inaccessibility in terms of Augustinian ocular desire, love, and loss, and Christian supersessionist readings of historical events such as the destruction of the temple and access to God’s face as signs of God’s removal of his favor from the old Israel. Thus, after the weeping of Rav Huna over Isaiah 1:12 and the loss of God’s face in *b. Hagigah* 4b, the thrust of the first midrashic exegesis in *b. Hagigah* 5a–b (part one, above) is to reappropriate God’s manifest absence as a positive marker of Jewishness. Rava, a leading, and apparently wealthy, fourth-century Babylonian Amora, fails to exhibit the signs of being “one of them,” the Jewish people, who, in the exegesis of the passage from Deuteronomy 31:17, are marked by the troubles and evils that are the consequence of God’s having turned away from them. Despite, or because of, his quip, Rava’s colleagues look askance at him, and as a consequence, agents of King Shapur plunder Rava’s wealth. This very suffering, in turn, marks him again as “one of them” (*mehem*).

The significance and power of the gaze in this story, and the rabbinic gaze in particular, is boldly emphasized in the chastened (or perhaps reproachful) words of Rava, “Rabban Shim’on b. Gamaliel said: Wherever the rabbis set their eyes there is either death or poverty.”⁹² The motif of rabbis killing, incinerating, or injuring with their gazes is found in Palestinian and Babylonian sources; this capacity is attributed to both Palestinian and Babylonian sages.⁹³ This kind of harmful gaze seems to reflect Greco-Roman theories of “extramissive” vision, which explained the power of vision, sometimes understood as a fiery ray, as a force that emanated from

⁹¹ Augustine, *Sermones* 178 (*Patrologia Latina*, 38.966, ed. Migne; *Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. Hill, part III, vol. v, 296). These words are preceded by: “If you are longing to see your God, if during this exile, this wandering, you are sighing for love of him, why then, the Lord your God is testing you as if he were to say to you: ‘Look, do what you like, satisfy all your greedy desires . . . I won’t punish you for any of this, I won’t cast you into hell; I will just deny you the sight of my face.’ If that has horrified you then you have really loved” (*ibid.*).

⁹² Compare the use of this tradition in *b. Sotah* 46b.

⁹³ E.g. Rav Sheshet (*b. Berakhot* 58a); R. Shim’on b. Yoḥai (*b. Shabbat* 33b; *Pesiḳta Derav Kahana* 11:16 [ed. Mandelbaum, 1:193]); R. Eli’ezer (*b. Bava Metsi’a* 59b); R. Yoḥanan (*Pesiḳta Derav Kahana* 18:5 [ed. Mandelbaum, 1:297–98]). See Turan, “Wherever the sages set their eyes.”

the eye.⁹⁴ As discussed in Chapter 1, such understandings of sight were likely to have been current in Mesopotamia and Persia.⁹⁵ Certainly, the notion of the harmful or evil eye was also a fixture of Zoroastrian thought and “popular” Mesopotamian and Persian religion. In rabbinic texts, rabbinic vision, in particular, is marked as singularly powerful.⁹⁶ This may be read as part of a move by Babylonian (and Palestinian) rabbis to locate sanctity in the physical person of the sage. As we will see, *b. Hagigah* reinforces this move quite explicitly.

Once Rava has been brought into conformity with the rest of “them” by suffering (part two, above), he offers his own interpretation of the current situation in which God’s face is no longer visible (part three). Here, the passage moves from loss to consolation. Rava argues that though God’s face is hidden, God nonetheless appears to Jews through dreams.⁹⁷ It is worth dwelling on the contrast that Rava draws between seeing God’s face in the temple and the contemporary state of affairs. This contrast between direct, unmediated, and reciprocal vision and the dream vision as a lesser form of communication is based on Numbers 12:6–8:

And [God] said: “Hear now my words. If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make myself known to him through a vision (*bamar’ah*), I shall speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; he is trusted throughout my house. Mouth to mouth I speak with him, an appearance (*umar’eh*), and not through riddles; and [at] the image of the Lord will he gaze (*utemunat adonay yabbat*).”

⁹⁴ Kalmin argues that these punitive gazes can be distinguished from the evil eye (Kalmin, “Evil eye”). Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 61:3 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:660): Rabbi Akiva’s disciples died “because their eyes were narrow with each other” (*shehayetah ‘enehem tsarah ellu be’ellu*); *y. Shabbat* 14:3, 14c; *y. Sanhedrin* 1:2, 18c (note the penetrative language: “the evil eye entered them”); and *b. Bava Metsi’a* 107b for its deadly effects.

⁹⁵ See *Bundahišn* 33:9, *Vendidad* 18:64, Forrest, *Concept of Evil* and sources in Chapter 1, especially n. 63. Pace Turan I believe that the Bavli, like Christian Mesopotamian and Zoroastrian sources, shows overlap with Greco-Roman notions of vision. For example, Ephrem shows familiarity with Greco-Roman visual theory (Possekel, *Evidence*, 186–229). Such notions of the gaze would also have found happy company with Zoroastrian physiological theories, in which sight was bound up with fire (Daryaei, “Sight, semen and the brain”).

⁹⁶ Divine beings whose eyes and other body parts radiate fire or transmit rays is a commonplace in second temple and early Christian and Jewish sources. See, e.g., Daniel 7:9–10; *Joseph and Aseneth* 14; 2 *Enoch* 39; 3 *Enoch* 15 (where Metatron describes how his body turned to flame and his eyes to fiery torches); Revelation 19:12. For those among the Triballi and Illyrii who kill with their gaze, see Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 7.2; cf. Solinus, *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* (ed. Mommsen, 26). For additional instances of a flaming and potentially fatal rabbinic gaze, see *b. Berakhot* 58b; *b. Mo’ed Qatan* 17b; *b. Nedarim* 7b; *b. Sotah* 46b; *b. Bava Batra* 14a (cast eyes . . . died), 75a (cast eyes . . . heap of bones).

⁹⁷ Like other ancient, the rabbis conceived of dreams as something that one “saw” rather than “had” (e.g. *b. Berakhot* 55a–57b). Dreams were thus a form of visual revelation.

This contrast between how God appears to and communicates with Moses and how he appears to other prophets is resoundingly visual in nature. Prophetic dream visions of God (*mar'ah*, “visions” and *hidot*, “riddles” that need to be deciphered) cannot compare with the “mouth-to-mouth” (*mar'eh*, “appearance”; *temunah*, “image”) encounter with Moses.⁹⁸ While this describes Israel’s former (and hopefully future) glory, in the present conditions, without a temple, the Jewish people do still enjoy lesser prophetic communication through dreams.⁹⁹

Rava’s striking exegetical theology is followed by Rav Joseph, who further mitigates the divine disfavor and facial aversion. He claims that God’s *hand* rests upon the Jews, even if his face is averted,¹⁰⁰ citing Isaiah 51:16, in which God covers Israel in “the shadow of his hand” and goes on to reassure them, “You are my people.”

That there may be a subtext of Christian supersessionism to the Talmudic discussion here is particularly suggestive given the final anecdote (part 4, above) and what follows.¹⁰¹ Here is that story once again:

R. Joshua b. Ḥananyah was at the court of Caesar.

A certain heretic showed him (*ahve*): “A people whose Lord has turned his face from them.”

[R. Joshua] showed him (*ahve*):¹⁰² “His hand is stretched over us.”

Caesar said to R. Joshua: “What did he show you?”

[R. Joshua replied:] “A people whose Lord has turned his face from them,” and I showed him, “His hand is stretched over us.”

They said to the heretic: “What did you show him?”

[The heretic replied:] “A people whose Lord has turned His face from them.”

⁹⁸ See also those biblical traditions that emphasize the direct appearance of God to Moses, such as Exodus 33:11 (“God spoke to Moses face-to-face, as one man speaks to another”); Deuteronomy 34:10 (“Never again did there arise in Israel a prophet like Moses, who knew God face-to-face”). Deuteronomy 4:15, in which *temunah*, “image” or “picture,” indicates a direct visual encounter with God, here in the negative, describing what the Israelites did not see at Sinai. Cf. Psalms 17:15, where gazing at God’s image, *temunah*, indicates a particularly intimate and direct visual experience of God. Here *temunatekha*, “your image,” is used as a parallel for *panekha*, “your face.”

⁹⁹ Rava reads against the explicit sense of the biblical verse in its original context, which is at pains to distinguish Moses as unique among other Israelite prophets. In Rava’s reading, all of Israel is supposed to have seen God’s face when the temple still stood, and it is only the absence of the temple which has removed this direct experience of God from the Jewish people. For the different types of vision enjoyed by Moses and the prophets, see *Leviticus Rabbah* 1:14 (ed. Margaliot, 1:30–32, citing portions of Number 12:6–8) and *b. Yevamot* 49b (Moses saw through fewer *aspaklaria*).

¹⁰⁰ Compare *Targum of Jonathan* to Isaiah 51:16.

¹⁰¹ Note the pattern of exegesis + narrative fulfillment + exegesis by the narrative’s protagonist (Rava). On the occurrences of Christian-Jewish confrontations in the Babylonian Talmud, see Kalmin, “Christians and heretics,” and Boyarin, “Hellenism,” 343.

¹⁰² See Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 437, s.v. *h-v-y/h-v-y*: “(1) to make a sign (as a means of non-verbal communication),” and examples therein.

[They asked:] “And what did he show you?”

[He replied:] “I do not know.”

They said: “Should a man who does not understand what they show him by gesture sign before the king! They took him out and killed him.”¹⁰³

R. Joshua b. Ḥananyah is the only Palestinian in this quartet of tales and exegesis, which otherwise all have Babylonian Amoraim as their protagonists.¹⁰⁴ This story falls into the category of Babylonian narratives that are clearly constructed by Babylonian storytellers but which feature earlier Palestinian Tannaim or Amoraim. The *min*, in this case likely meant to be a Christian given his particular taunt, mocks the Rabbi (and by extension, Jews) in visual gestures (“visions” and “riddles” rather than direct speech): You are of a people from whom God has removed his face, in other words, you are no longer his people.¹⁰⁵

Perhaps the implication is that not only has God removed his countenance from the Jews and allowed them to suffer, but that he is now gazing in a new direction, towards a New Israel. Jews, after all, were no longer able to see or recognize God, in contradistinction to those who recognized Christ. We already see this kind of claim in 2 Corinthians 3:18, which contrasts clear perception of the divine with the obstructed vision of the Jews.¹⁰⁶

And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding (as in a mirror) the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another.

Such notions of Christian vision compared to Jewish blindness is a trope that found its way into a variety of late antique Christian discourses. A venerable motif in Christian discourse, for example, was the attribution of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple to divine judgment against the Jews.¹⁰⁷ This motif was often expressed in terms of vision, or lack

¹⁰³ B. *Ḥagigah* 5a–b.

¹⁰⁴ Without the alternating (mostly Aramaic) stories of 2 and 4, we are left with three Babylonian Amoraic (third to fourth century) midrashic dicta on Deuteronomy 31:17. The editorial insertion of the two tales (about fourth-century Babylonian Amoraim and a first-century Palestinian Tanna) serves to sharpen and thematize vision and spectacle (among rabbis, and between rabbis and imperial powers). 4 is a later Babylonian story with its obvious echoes and inversions of 2. The editor’s insertions of the stories allow Rava as protagonist in 2 to foreground his *memra* in 3, with the *memrot* in 3 then enacted in story 4.

¹⁰⁵ In *Lamentations Rabbah* 3:21 (ed. Buber, 66b) gentiles declare to Israel that God has abandoned them and has removed his *shekhinah* from them. On this parable’s relationship to the theological challenge of Christianity, see Hasan-Rokem, *Tales of the Neighborhood*, 39–40.

¹⁰⁶ This, in turn, recalls Numbers 12:6–8. See also the preceding passage, 2 Corinthians 3:14–16.

¹⁰⁷ Gager, *Origins of Anti-Semitism*, 96, 157. From Justin to Augustine to Ephrem, Christian writers employed the motif of Jewish blindness. Jews in these writings could function as figures for Christians (Fredriksen, “Augustine and Israel”).

thereof.¹⁰⁸ Whether linked to the temple or not, the genre of *Adversus Judaeos* writings, which took the Jews as their target, often cast Jews as unseeing, blind, or insensible. For example, Augustine figures the Jew as a blind man with a lantern who illuminates the way for others, but who, due to his own lack of sight, is unable to travel along the path.¹⁰⁹ For Jerome, not only were Jews blind, as per 2 Corinthians, but in their insensible state, they were themselves like idols:

The curtain of the temple is torn, for that which had been veiled in Judea is unveiled to all the nations; the curtain is torn and the mysteries of the law are revealed to the faithful, but to unbelievers they are hidden to this very day. When Moses, the Old Testament, is read aloud by the Jews on every Sabbath, according to the testimony of the apostle: "the veil covers their hearts." They read the law, true enough, but they do not understand because their eyes have grown so dim that they cannot see. They are, indeed, like those of whom Scripture says, "They have eyes but they see not; they have ears but they hear not."¹¹⁰

The figure of the blind Jew also surfaces among Syriac-speaking Christians closer to the Babylonian rabbis. Ephrem, for example, liked to characterize the Jews as sensorily blocked and, as a consequence, despised of God. Of particular use was the motif of blindness, which is no surprise given Ephrem's stress on vision, in approaching the divine. The Jews' blindness to their own God led to their building of the golden calf; their blindness to Christ led to their rejection of him.¹¹¹ It is possible that the Babylonian storytellers knew of such claims. Certainly this story looks very much like a satire in which a "heretic" signs such a claim to the rabbi, only to sign his own death warrant.¹¹² The story highlights the importance of vision in competing claims about access to God's favor.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Eusebius repeatedly makes much of the visuality of Jerusalem. In Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.6, *Theophania* 4.20, the Jewish inability to look is contrasted with Christian eyes, which see the visible witness of the temple ruins as evidence of God's disfavor. The recurring language here is strongly visual: *phainesthai*, *opthalmois*, *horān*, *theōrein*, *autoptou*. For more examples of this, see Eusebius, *Theophania* 1.18, 4.3.

¹⁰⁹ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 56. Tertullian, *Adversus Judaeos* 13.4, contrasts Christian vision (invoking Isaiah 33:13) with restricted Jewish vision (invoking 33:15). See also Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 75: "The Jews are afflicted like some demented person who sees the earth lit up by the sun, but denies the sun that lights it up" (trans. in *On the Incarnation*, 75).

¹¹⁰ Jerome, *Tractatus in Psalmos* 88 (89) (*Homilies of St. Jerome*, trans. Liguori Ewald, vol. 1, 68).

¹¹¹ For these and other examples see Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism*, 47–49, 132.

¹¹² On rabbinic parody, see Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature*.

¹¹³ It is difficult to posit with any certainty that, in both Palestinian and Babylonian literature, a reference to a heretic necessarily indicates a Christian, but because of the content of this particular narrative I do not think that it stretches credulity to suggest it in this instance. On the function of the *min* in rabbinic literature, see Kalmin, "Christians and heretics"; Teppler, *Birkat haminim*. For a careful and cautious analysis of this problem, see Cohen, "Nehardea."

To the heretic's signing, R. Joshua b. Hananyah responds in kind and "quotes" Rav Joseph's teaching that God's hand covers the Jews (and, as the verse continues, claims them as his people).¹¹⁴ At this point, the emperor intervenes, having apparently observed the mime between the rabbi and the *min* (heretic).¹¹⁵ The story contrives to have R. Joshua triumph on several levels. He has triumphed not only in the content of the argument – he has the last word – but also in its form: The Christian, who has essentially accused the Jews of not seeing, cannot himself see, in order to decode the gestures in a conversation of his own initiation.

The "showing" (*h-v-y*, *maḥog*) and showy communication – which *uses* hands and faces and which is also *about* hands and faces – plays on the inadequacy of the Christian who initiated the "conversation" by making his mime into a farce.¹¹⁶ The *min* can gesticulate, but he cannot read. While the Jewish inability to see, and to read, God's countenance, or Word, was supposed to account for the Jew's fall in status, in the Talmudic story it is the *min*'s inability to read the Jew's body(-language) that causes his own downfall and demise, through the imperial court's reprimand and execution. Christian triumphalism is ill-advised, argues this tale.

The story functions as a masterful staging of the exegesis that preceded it.¹¹⁷ The Talmudic *sugya* effectively moves away from the bitterness of a post-temple era without access to God's face toward a somewhat more hopeful, and even triumphant, interpretation of the contemporary situation. And it does so in a complex fashion that plays, on different levels, with visuality and its loss.

Notice that the Bavli has juxtaposed two different imperial powers and concomitant Jewish situations in the story of Rava and the Persian king and of R. Joshua and the Roman emperor. The story ensures that Rava

¹¹⁴ Note the allusion to Exodus 33:22–23, another instance of restricted visual access combined with God's hand: "As my presence passes by, I will place you in a cleft in the rock and shield you with my hand (*vesakkoti khappi 'alekha*) until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand (*vahasiroti et kappi*), and you will see my back (*vera'ita et aḥoray*), but my face may not be seen (*ufanay lo' yera'u*)." R. Joshua b. Hananyah is a Tanna and lived over two hundred years earlier than Rav Joseph, so the "quoting" happens only on the editorial level of the passage.

¹¹⁵ Given the corporeal nature of the content being communicated (God's face turned away, God's hand is stretched over us), the story allows us to imagine the gestures and hand motions quite evocatively.

¹¹⁶ On the mime or pantomime actor (cf. the Talmud's *maḥog*, "gesture") in the ancient world, see Purcell, "Does Caesar mime?"; Barnes, "Christians and the theater"; Moss, "Jacob of Serugh's homilies"; Lateiner, "Humiliation and immobility."

¹¹⁷ That the context is likely Jewish-Christian debate is reinforced by the Talmud's account of R. Joshua b. Hananyah's deathbed scene, in which the rabbis ask R. Joshua, "What will become of us at the hands of the unbelievers?" (*b. Hagigah* 5b).

suffers through the hands of King Shapur in order to mark him as one who shares the fate of the Jews (suffering), while it is the Roman emperor who dispenses with the *min* who argues that Jews are suffering from God having turned away from them. Through the mediation of Persian and Roman imperial authorities, these stories reiterate the rabbinic perspective on the loss of God's face: mournful yet confident that it still remains a sign of the singular Jewish relationship with the divine.

As mentioned, this play with visuality and its loss suffuses the entire Babylonian tractate of *Ḥagigah*.¹¹⁸ If these last two narratives about Rava and R. Joshua b. Ḥananyah frame the loss of divine visuality under the aegis of imperial Rome and Persia, a narrative that follows shortly after these (at *b. Ḥagigah* 5b) represents a rabbinic attempt to relocate visible sanctity in a post-cultic era:

Rabbi [Judah the Patriarch] and R. Ḥiyya were on a journey. When they arrived at a certain place they said, "Is there a student of the rabbis here? Let us go and receive his face (*apehb*)."

They said, "There is a student of the rabbis (*tsurba merabbanan*) here, and he is blind (*ma'or 'enayyim*)."¹¹⁹

R. Ḥiyya said to Rabbi, "Sit, do not treat your position as patriarch lightly. I will go and receive his face."

He [Rabbi] took hold of him and went with him.

When they were departing from [the blind scholar], he said to them, "You have received a face that is seen but cannot see (*panim hanir'im ve'enan ro'in*); may you merit to receive the face [of the *shekhinah*, the divine presence],¹²⁰ which sees and is not seen (*haro'im ve'enan nir'in*)."¹²¹

He said [Rabbi to R. Ḥiyya], "If now [I had listened to you], you would have deprived me of this blessing."

They said to him, "From whom did you hear this [teaching]?"

[He replied,] "I heard the teaching at a lecture of R. Jacob. For R. Jacob of Kefar Ḥittiya used to receive the face of his teacher every day. When

¹¹⁸ See note 66 above.

¹¹⁹ Note the similar scenario and phrasing in *b. Niddah* 33b (Rav Pappa goes to a town, asks whether a student of the rabbis lives there so he can receive his face, and is told that a *tsurba merabbanan* lives there). For Rava's explanation of the excitement of a *tsurba merabbanan* in terms of the fiery nature of Torah, see *b. Tu'anit* 4a. The meaning and etymology of *tsurba* (and *ts.r.b.*) is uncertain (Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Palestinian Aramaic*, 956, 971). Suggestions range from "young student" to "intermediate student of the rabbis" (Sokoloff) to "one who has caught fire by associating with Rabbis" (Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1271). For various interpretations of this term and bibliography see Miller, *Sages*, 408–10.

¹²⁰ All the primary mss. read explicitly, *tizku uteqabbelu pene shekhinah*, "May you merit to receive the face of the *shekhinah*," which is omitted and left implicit in the Vilna edition.

¹²¹ See *Genesis Rabbah* 92:1 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1137–38), where R. Ḥama blesses a blind student of Torah.

he [R. Jacob] grew up,¹²² he [his teacher] said to him, ‘Sir, do not trouble yourself, if you are unable [to visit every day].’ He replied, ‘Is what is written concerning the rabbis a small thing? “He shall still live always, he shall not see the pit. For he sees that wise men die” (Psalms 49:10–11). Now, if he who sees wise men at their death shall live, how much more so [he who sees them] in their life!’¹²³

Both by its strategic placement in this tractate and by its content, this story makes a curious argument for post-temple visions of God. Instead of a pilgrimage to see *God’s* face, R. Judah the Patriarch and R. Ḥiyya seek a rabbinic face when they arrive at a town in the course of their travels; *nigabbel appeh*, “let us receive his face.”¹²⁴ It turns out that the local scholar is blind, *ma’or ‘enayim*.¹²⁵ While this is a euphemistic expression for blindness, the particular combination of words in Hebrew also recalls rabbinic expressions for explaining, teaching or enlightening, literally “to illuminate (in *Hiphil*) the eyes.”¹²⁶ This expression for blindness draws the reader’s attention to the complex relationship between seeing, not seeing, and the special role of the sage in this story.

Let us also recall that it was precisely through excluding the blind from the obligation of *re’iyat panim* (seeing the face) that the Babylonian rabbis imagined a radically anthropomorphic and reciprocal divine–human visuality at the center of the pilgrimage ritual. It is poignant and fitting that the blind scholar points to the restoration of such visuality, in the person of the sage. In a world without God’s face, the blind scholar exemplifies everyone’s inability to see. Perhaps the narrative puts a certain rebuke to the physical elitism required by the mirroring logic of homovisuality. R. Ḥiyya, using logic similar to that which deems those with blemishes, the blind, and others, neither “fit” nor “worthy” (*re’uyin*) to fulfill the obligation of seeing (*re’iyah*), argues that the patriarch’s dignity would be impinged by visiting a blind man, even a scholar. His position is discredited, and R. Judah the Patriarch’s virtuous refusal to insist on his honor is made all the more apparent by what unfolds as a result of their visit to the blind

¹²² Alternatively, this could be “when he (the teacher) grew old.” On this reading the teacher seeks to absolve his student from his visits because he is no longer able to teach him (cf. *y. Eruvin* 5:1, 22b; *y. Sanhedrin* 11:4, 30b).

¹²³ *B. Hagigah* 5b. See partial parallels at *y. Pe’ah* 8:9, 21b; *y. Sheqalim* 5:5, 49b, discussed below, and Rosenthal, “Traditions”; Kister, “Another fragment,” 477.

¹²⁴ This *qabbalat panim* recalls the *re’iyat panim* pilgrimage.

¹²⁵ The narrative is ripe with literary play on the visual. See Marcus, “Some antiphrastic euphemisms.” Cf. *y. Pe’ah* 5:6, 19a; *y. Ketubot* 1:1, 25a; *Leviticus Rabbah* 34:13 (ed. Margaliot, 11:800); *b. Berakhot* 56a.

¹²⁶ For the use of *me’ir ‘enayim* to refer to teaching, see, e.g., *t. Bava Metsi’a* 2:30; *t. Horayot* 2:5; *y. Bava Metsi’a* 2:11, 8d; *b. Shabbat* 147b; *b. Yevamot* 35a; and *b. Bava Metsi’a* 33a.

scholar. The ideal of homovisuality, however, is upheld by the wish for its restoration expressed in the blind scholar's blessing.

The blessing of Rabbi and R. Ḥiyya by the unnamed blind student of the rabbis, together with the nested stories about its derivation, are remarkable, particularly in terms of how they appropriate and subvert a version of the narrative found in the Palestinian Talmud:

The rabbi (*rabbah*, or "teacher") of R. Hosha'ya Rabbah's son was a blind man (*sagya nehorya*), and he was accustomed to dine with him daily. On one occasion R. Hosha'ya had guests and did not ask the teacher to eat with him.

That evening, R. Hosha'ya went to him and said, "Sir, do not be angry at me; I had guests and did not wish to injure sir's honor. For this reason I did not dine with you today."

The teacher responded, "You have apologized to the one who is seen but does not see. May the one who sees but is not seen accept your apology."

R. Hosha'ya said, "Where did you learn this [expression]?"

The rabbi responded, "From R. Eli'ezer b. Jacob. For a blind man once came to R. Eli'ezer b. Jacob's village, and R. Eli'ezer b. Jacob sat below him. As a result, the others said, 'If he were not a great man, R. Eli'ezer b. Jacob would not have sat below him,' and they provided for the blind man an honorable maintenance. The blind man said to them, 'Why have you done this for me?' They responded, 'R. Eli'ezer b. Jacob sat below you.' And so he offered the following prayer on the rabbi's behalf, 'You have performed a deed of mercy for one who is seen but does not see; may the one who sees but is not seen perform a deed of mercy for you.'"¹²⁷

The Palestinian story presents a rather different context for this blessing from that in the Babylonian Talmud. In the Palestinian version the blind teacher in the initial, framing, narrative is actually *dishonored* when R. Hosha'ya fails to include him among his guests. As Seth Schwartz points out, R. Hosha'ya's apology is disingenuous, and the response of the teacher, "May the one who sees but is not seen accept your apology," is a rebuke.¹²⁸ The reported narrative with which the teacher explains the origins of this particular saying illustrates the ideal behavior toward the blind. It is supposed to contrast with R. Hosha'ya's conduct. This literary device of *mise en abyme* highlights the theme of conviviality, as Schwartz observes; these are two sympotic tales. If the rabbinic status of the teacher is (at the very least) uncertain, the second, illustrative tale clearly concerns a blind layperson, not a sage. The above-mentioned features are significant

¹²⁷ *Y. Pe'ah* 8:9, 21b; cf. also *y. Sheqalim* 5:5, 49b. I have slightly modified the translation in Schwartz, "No dialogue at the symposium," 211. See the interpretation of the story there.

¹²⁸ Schwartz, "No dialogue at the symposium," 212.

differences to the Babylonian version. The relationship between blindness and sageliness is not thematized in the Yerushalmi in the way that it is in the Babylonian Talmud.

Comparing the Palestinian with the Babylonian version allows us better to appreciate the boldness of the latter. We see the ways in which the Babylonian editors have redeployed the Palestinian motifs to point toward a rehabilitation of the *re'iyah* ritual in a post-temple world. The “unseen seer,” an easily recognizable epithet for God (in the manuscripts of the Bavli version it is spelled out as the *shekhinah*), is more loaded in the later Babylonian story not just because of the blind/seeing contrast and juxtaposition to the discussion of the *re'iyah* ritual, but also because it describes the current historical moment in which God continues to see the Jews, but they cannot see him in return. In other words, the present is difficult because the cherished reciprocity, or homovisuality, has been lost. The face of this particular rabbinic scholar, in both its visibility and its blindness, stands in for all Jewish faces and eyes vis-à-vis the divine.

Furthermore, the thorough rabbinization of the Babylonian story is quite striking. It is not simply a measure-for-measure morality tale, but rather it is about seeing sages as a way to merit seeing God.¹²⁹ Thus, while in the original tale, the blind teacher's story concerns a blind man who is honored by a rabbi, in our Babylonian version, the blind sage tells a story that is simply about a rabbi going to *see* (receive the face of) his teacher on a daily basis.¹³⁰ Furthermore in the third nested narrative in the Bavli (R. Jacob of Kefar Hittiya and his teacher), the teacher is not even blind. This is not an anecdote designed to uphold the principle of honoring a blind rabbi (or person), but rather the life-giving impact of seeing a rabbi.¹³¹ At the suggestion that R. Jacob need not continue his daily visits, the Bavli has him respond “is what is written concerning the *rabbis* a small thing?” Psalms 49:10 is then strikingly reread as pertaining to the value in seeing sages. The actual verse in context refers to the inevitability of death, to the idea that there is no way to redeem the cost of a soul such that “he shall still live always, he shall not see the pit.” The Psalm then says, “He shall see that wise people die, that the fool and the brute perish together” (Psalms 49:11). The Bavli's midrashic exegesis reads, “He shall live always, he shall

¹²⁹ Compare to *b. Hagigah* 3b, discussed below.

¹³⁰ I think a good case can be made for the Bavli's story as a later reworked version of the prior Palestinian story. The deep contextual connections in the Bavli and the typically Babylonian themes of the narrative are arguments for this. So too is the near-duplication of language in *b. Niddah* 33b.

¹³¹ Conversely, in the second, embedded, Palestinian story, the blind person is not a rabbi. So the “moral” is less about respect toward (blind) rabbis and more about respect toward the blind person in general.

not *see* the pit” as the reward for one who “*sees* wise men,” omitting the verb “die” from the biblical verse. R. Jacob, in the blind sage’s tale, argues that if seeing dead rabbis results in longevity, then surely the sight of living sages will be even more efficacious. Finally, the story as a whole argues, as much by its editorial placement as by its content, that in the present moment, seeing the rabbinic sage offers a substitute for *re’iyah*.

As I have argued throughout, the progression and arrangement of material in *b. Hagigah* as a whole makes a case. We can trace a lingering rabbinic nostalgia for an intimate ocular moment between God and pilgrim, which then undergoes a melancholic shift in a post-temple era in which God’s face is absent. If reciprocity was central to *re’iyah*, then the Babylonian rabbis conceive of the present as a time in which Jews are seen without seeing in return. This leads to meditations, through narrative and exegesis, that deal with the implications of this “loss of face.” Once the heretics have been disposed with, there is a recuperative turn to the face of the rabbi as a temporary substitute for the “face of God” – temporary because in the face of the blind rabbi, who is seen without seeing, there is an exemplum of its loss.

The narrative of the blind rabbi also gestures with hope toward the restoration of “seeing and being seen.” With his blessing – “may you merit to receive the face that sees and is not seen” – the Babylonian Talmud turns the blessings of the Palestinian story to quite different effect.¹³² The Palestinian blessings clearly contrast the “unseen seer” with the blind protagonist(s), but the content of the blessing’s request does not concern vision. In its version of the blessing, the Babylonian Talmud frames the present not only in the light of a lost past, but also in terms of hope about and expectation of a future in which visual reciprocity will be once more.¹³³

Visuality in Masekhet Hagigah: re’iyah, histakkelut, hatsatsah

Sight, and specifically sight of God, is a theme in *m.* and *t. Hagigah* that extends beyond the tractate’s discussions of the *re’iyah* pilgrimage in the first chapter. Seeing God also surfaces in the second chapter of this tractate. However, the tone therein is cautionary, to say the least. We find warnings

¹³² Compare this to the *y. Pe’ah* 8:9, 21b narrative, where the blind teacher says, “May the one who sees but is not seen accept your apology,” while the blind person in the blind teacher’s story offers the blessing, “You have performed a deed of mercy for one who is seen but does not see; may the one who sees but is not seen perform a deed of mercy for you.” Thus, the content of the blessings does not itself relate to *sight*, as does the Bavli’s blessing.

¹³³ Cf. *Pesiqta Derav Kahana* 12:25 (discussed below at p. 59). For various approaches to the visual reciprocity or asymmetry between the human and the divine, see note 156 below.

in *m. Hagigah* 2:1 and *t. Hagigah* 2:7 against “looking into” (*mistakkelin be-*) and in *t. Hagigah* 2:1 against “expounding” (*doreshin*) certain matters, including theophany (the divine chariot or *merkavah*, as per Ezekiel 1).¹³⁴ In *t. Hagigah* 2:1, we hear about the fate of those who entered the orchard (*pardes*) and “glimpsed” (*hetsits*):

Four entered the orchard (*pardes*): Ben ‘Azay, Ben Zoma, the Other (*Aher*), and R. Akiva. One glimpsed (*hetsits*) and died, one glimpsed and was hurt, one glimpsed and cut the shoots, and one went up safely and came down safely.¹³⁵

What is this orchard, whose contents are visually apprehended to potentially catastrophic effect?¹³⁶ Clues lie in the restrictions and prohibitions in *m. Hagigah* 2:1, *t. Hagigah* 2:1, and *t. Hagigah* 2:7. The Tosefta enhances the esoteric sense of the journey into the *pardes* by refusing to divulge any details about what was seen. Instead it operates by way of parable:

To what can this be compared? To a king’s orchard (*pardes*) with an upper chamber built over it. What is a person to do? [He should] just peek (*lehatsits*), as long as he does not feast his eyes upon it (*yazin et ‘enav mimmennu*)¹³⁷.

Here, too, the object of the gaze is left vague, and this seems to be the point. The parable enacts the very caution it advises. If the king is a stand-in for God, then the parable cautions against letting one’s gaze linger on the king’s upper chamber. Rather, one should merely glance (*lehatsits*), precisely the kind of looking attributed to the four rabbis who entered the *pardes*. The visual emphasis here cannot be denied.

T. Hagigah 2:6 describes a curious encounter between Ben Zoma, one of the sages who “glimpsed and was hurt,” and R. Joshua, which expresses

¹³⁴ *M. Hagigah* 2:1 (par. *t. Hagigah* 2:7): “Anyone who gazes at (*mistakkel be-*) four things, it would be fitting for him (*ra’uy lo*) as if he had not come into this world: what is above, what is below, what is in front (other mss., ‘in the past’) and what is behind (other mss., ‘to come in the future’).”

¹³⁵ *T. Hagigah* 2:3–4 (parallel in *Song of Songs Rabbah* s.v. Songs 1:4). Significantly, there are accounts in Palestinian and Babylonian sources of Palestinian rabbis undertaking (sometimes through fasting) to see dead sages. See, e.g., *y. Ketubot* 12:3, 35a (parallels in *y. Kil’ayim* 9:4, 32b; *Genesis Rabbah* 100:3 [ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:1284–86]) and *b. Bava Metsi’a* 85b.

¹³⁶ See *t. Megillah* 3:28 for the distinction between “expounding on” and “seeing” the Chariot: “Many have expounded on the Chariot but have never seen it.” Cf. *b. Megillah* 24b.

¹³⁷ *T. Hagigah* 2:5 (trans. in Schäfer, *Origins*, 204). The reading of the printed edition, *yaziz* (“as long as he does not remove his eyes from it”), is not supported by any of the manuscript traditions. Fascinatingly, the Palestinian Talmud’s version of this tradition, *y. Hagigah* 2:1, 77c, reads, “[He should] just peek, but not to touch.” This version evokes the purity/gaze concerns discussed above, in the context of the face-bread and *m. Hagigah* 3:8. In terms of late-antique visual theory, “feasting one’s eyes” is practically “touching.” Schäfer does not think that this source refers to the divine (*Origins*, 205–6).

the confluence of the conceptual, exegetical, and visual registers of this inadvisable looking:

Once R. Joshua was walking along the road and Ben Zoma was approaching him. Ben Zoma came alongside him and did not greet him.

[R. Joshua] said to him, "From where to where [are you going]?"

Ben Zoma said to him, "I was gazing (*mistakkel*, according to Ms. Erfurt; Ms. Vienna reads *tsofe*, 'looking') at the work of creation, and there is not even a handbreadth's distance between the upper and lower waters. As it says, 'The spirit of God was hovering over the waters,'" (Genesis 1:2) . . .

R. Joshua said to his students, "Ben Zoma is already beyond (*mibbaputs*)."

It was not many days until Ben Zoma was gone (*nistalleq*).¹³⁸

Ben Zoma is not just glimpsing but is "gazing" or "looking" (*mistakkel* or *tsofe*), and so his injury is ultimately mortal. While some of the cautions and prohibitions in *m. Hagigah* 2 and *t. Hagigah* 2 refer to exposition (*derishah*) of certain subjects, others are emphatically visual. Interestingly, the object of Ben Zoma's inspection is as much visual as exegetical. The more intent and lingering kind of gazing (*histakkelut* or *tsefiyyah*) can also have the sense of "looking into" or "speculating." In this way, cognition is conceptually intertwined with the literal, physical, and possibly, given the editorial placement of this chapter, cultic sense of seeing. The move from *re'iyah*, or going to see God on pilgrimage, to the varieties of looking in this second chapter of the tractate echoes the move in Plato from the cultic, visual sense of *theōria* (lit. "viewing") to its philosophical meaning. As has been shown, *theōria*'s cultic, visual sense continued to be part of its philosophical meaning.¹³⁹ So, too, can we understand the looking referenced in these Tannaitic sources, as indebted to the *re'iyah* of pilgrimage cult.¹⁴⁰

The differences in the usage of vision in these first and second chapters are informative. Even as the details of "mystical" sights are elusive, we can note some important features. First, the insistence upon the sense of sight has a semantic and verbal range, as is evinced by the repeated use of visual verbs and expressions, such as looking (*re'iyah*), gazing (*histaklut*), glimpsing (*hatsatsah*), and feasting the eyes (*hazanat 'enayim*). Secondly, these are doubly rabbinized accounts, in their use of protagonists, and in

¹³⁸ *T. Hagigah* 2:6 (paralleled in *y. Hagigah* 2:1, 77a-b; *b. Hagigah* 15a; *Genesis Rabbah* 2:4 [ed. Theodor-Albeck, 1:17-18]).

¹³⁹ For a description of how Plato used *theōria* in his philosophy in its visual sense, particularly in cultic contexts ("sacralized visuality"), see Nightingale, *Spectacles*, 107-13.

¹⁴⁰ This is based on literary association rather than etymology.

their intertwining of the scholastic with the visual.¹⁴¹ These accounts then, unlike the *re'iyah* of the first chapter, pertain to a post-temple era – less common in Tannaitic sources which tend to be reluctant to contemplate present-day visions of God. And these sources hardly supply a ringing endorsement of such enterprises.

If the above Tannaitic texts cast latter-day rabbinic attempts to penetrate divine mysteries, conceptually or visually, as dangerous enterprises, it is notable that an account of a successful and lauded exploration of the theophanic chariot in *t. Hagigah* 2:1 concerns R. Ele'azar b. Arakh, who “expounds” (*derishah*) the “account of the Chariot”; rather than “gazing” (*histakkelut*) or “glimpsing” (*hastetsah*). In its retelling in the Yerushalmi and the Bavli, this successful study session becomes a spectacular event, in and of itself, with fire descending from heaven.¹⁴² In both Talmuds, but particularly in *b. Hagigah*, this event itself (and a second related account) becomes a theophanic (rainbow appears, along with angels and the *shekhinah*), fiery, Sinaitic spectacle.¹⁴³ Especially vivid is the Bavli's appended story in which Rabban Yoḥanan b. Zakka'y declares his joy at what his eyes saw (*ashre 'enay shekakh ra'u*), relating a dream in which he and R. Yose were “reclining together at Sinai.” In their insertion of spectacular, theophanic, and revelatory qualities into the rabbinic study of God's revelation, these later, remarkable tales fuse the exegetical and scholastic together with the ocular. In the Bavli, angels come “to see” (*lir'ot*) the sight of rabbis expounding the theophany; the spectacle or visual object here is the rabbi, not God (who is a spectator). This comports with the trend that we find in various contexts in post-Tannaitic materials – the visual turn toward the sage – which we noted with respect to *re'iyah* in *b. Hagigah* 5b and which we will explore in Chapter 6.¹⁴⁴ While the Bavli sustains the Tannaitic ambivalence and caution about rabbis exploring

¹⁴¹ There need not be a contrast between the visual and exegetical-scholastic aspects of whatever it is that is the object of *derashah/histaklut/hatsatsah*. Given the preceding chapter on *re'iyah*, and the editorial logic placing these two issues in proximity, it seems reasonable to take the visual aspects of the second chapter of *Hagigah* seriously. For consideration of the non-binary relation of vision, exegesis and scholasticism, see Chapter 3, pp. 109–10.

¹⁴² This story is placed in the Talmud's commentary on the *m. Hagigah* 2:1 injunction against expounding the Chariot theophany.

¹⁴³ See *y. Hagigah* 2:1, 77a–b; *b. Hagigah* 14b.

¹⁴⁴ See further, *y. Hagigah* 2:1, 77b (parallel in *b. Hagigah* 15b), in which R. Eli'ezer and R. Joshua are studying together, and fire instantly surrounds them. They recount this as follows: “We were sitting searching around in the words of the Torah from the Pentateuch to the Prophets, and from the Prophets to the Writings, and the words were as bright as when they were given at Sinai, and the fire made them glow as they glowed from Sinai.” In this narrative, the spectacle induced by the rabbinic study mirrors that of the divine revelation at Sinai. On the Sinaitic spectacle attached to the sages, see Urbach, “*Torat Ha-Sod*,” 2–11.

God's mysteries, it does not dispense with their visuality and physicality in its expansive commentary on Ezekiel's theophany and *m. Hagigah* 2:1 (*b. Hagigah* 11a–16a). We learn that expounding the Chariot can result in being consumed by fire (*b. Hagigah* 13a); what Ezekiel saw does not compare to what Isaiah saw (*b. Hagigah* 13b); the rainbow is theophanic and that gazing at it is disrespectful (*b. Hagigah* 16a); gazing at the rainbow, the patriarch and priests causes blindness (*ibid.*).¹⁴⁵

Given *b. Hagigah*'s particularly vivid understanding of *re'iyah*, threaded throughout, it behooves us to take seriously the relationship between the Bavli's *re'iyah* and its understanding of investigations into theophany related to *m. Hagigah* 2. The Bavli's presentation of rabbinic engagement with theophanic and other speculation is certainly scholastic in orientation, but is also not without its visual components.¹⁴⁶ Its caution about the pursuit of God in the present dovetails with the tractate's emphatic construction of a present without the sight of God. Not only does the Bavli's presentation of *m. and t. Hagigah* 2 comport with the resolute pastness of *re'iyah* and its idealized location in the temple, but to the extent that it is positive rather than cautionary about theophany and its study, it also echoes the move from God gazing to sage gazing (with its depiction of spectacular study sessions in *b. Hagigah* 15a–b).

When we compare this attitude toward beholding God to that in *Hekhalot* literature, we find something different.¹⁴⁷ The latter sources feature rabbinic protagonists seeking (among other things) to “see the King in his beauty” (Isaiah 33:17).¹⁴⁸ These writings are also informed by a healthy

¹⁴⁵ For a reading of Song of Songs 2:9 to refer to (among other things) God gazing over the priests' shoulders as they utter their blessing, see *Pesiqta Derav Kahana* 5:8 (ed. Mandelbaum, 1:91). For a prohibition against looking at priests while they are blessing, see *y. Megillah* 4:7, 75c (paralleled in *y. Ta'anit* 4:1, 67b).

¹⁴⁶ The exegetical trend, and the cautionary tone, need not vitiate against a serious concern with the visual, here. After all, the very premise of binocular *re'iyah* is unabashedly exegetical (*yir'eh, yera'eh*). So too does the Talmudic text itself engage exegetically with these forbidden sights.

¹⁴⁷ On the relationship between *b. Hagigah* 11a–16b and *Hekhalot* materials see Schäfer, *Origins*, 241–42; Boustán, “Rabbinization,” 499.

¹⁴⁸ Wolfson, *Speculum*, 82–124. For an assessment of the variety of goals, and a de-emphasis of the vision itself, in various mystical texts from ascent apocalypses to the *Hekhalot* sources, see Schäfer, *Origins*, 28–30, 70, 84, 245–52, 268–300, 341. Swartz notes that scholastic expertise is another aim of this literature. For an example of vision, memory, and scholasticism combined, see *Merkavah Shelemah* (ed. Mussayeff, 4b); cf. Naeh, “Art of memory.” These texts, which are all about the quest to see God, were produced by groups of mystics that may have overlapped somewhat with rabbinic circles, even if they were not identical. Some scholars have sought to analyze these sources in a Mesopotamian-Zoroastrian context, while others have placed them in a Byzantine Christian world. For the view that these mystical texts represent the esoteric practices of an inner group of rabbis, see Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 52–53 and Scholem, *Major Trends*, 14–19. For accounts of different views, see Boustán, “Study,” and Swartz, “Jewish visionary tradition,” 201, and bibliographies therein.

sense of danger, often (but not only) posed in terms of visual damage by the fiery eyes and bodies of angelic guards and God himself. However, their aim is to surmount rather than succumb to these obstacles. Unlike *b. Hagigah*, this literature fixates upon the sight of God and other heavenly beings rather than the sage, refusing the melancholy trope of pastness or the wait until death or restoration of cult. *Hekhalot* writings ostentatiously chart the journey to God in this lifetime, ostentatiously risking life itself in so doing.¹⁴⁹

B. *Hagigah*: vision and the face of the sage

Our consideration of the various preoccupations with divine viscosity in the tractate of *Hagigah* is especially borne out in the Bavli, which as we have argued attempts a similar transfer as *b. Hagigah* 5b and 15a (and again in 15b) from theophany to sagely viscosity. In this section, we simply note that a third example of this move also occurs early in the tractate, at *b. Hagigah* 3a–b, in a doublet of stories about sages going to see their masters on the festival.

In the second of these stories, R. Yose b. Durmasqit goes to “receive the face” of R. Ele‘azar at Lod and unwittingly insults him. R. Ele‘azar instructs R. Yose to, “stretch out your hands and take out your eye.” Later R. Ele‘azar softens and prays for R. Yose’s sight to be restored.¹⁵⁰ As Jeffrey Rubenstein notes, the first tale is placed here because the content of the *derashah* discussed within pertains to the halakhic discussion (regarding *haqhel*) that precedes the *sugya*, and this follows the Palestinian parallel. The relationship of the second story (with the eye loss) is less obvious.

Rubenstein also considers the broader redactional context of *re’iyah* and cautiously suggests that this story juxtaposes the halakhic deliberations about “journeying to the temple and honoring God, the Master of the Universe, and the students’ journeying to their masters and honoring them with their presence,” in order to promote the rabbis’ holiness.¹⁵¹ He says:

The redaction of the aggadic *sugya* in the context of mHag 1:1 could be seen as arguing for a kind of transference of religious devotion from the temple to the rabbinic master . . . Whereas in biblical times the Israelite appeared

¹⁴⁹ Scholars have studied the links between Jewish and Christian mysticism (Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron*; Stroumsa, “To see”; DeConick [ed.], *Paradise Now*).

¹⁵⁰ Vision’s centrality to the master–student relationship and the transmission of teaching is upheld by its removal when honor is not accorded. See Rubenstein, *Culture*, 54–55.

¹⁵¹ Rubenstein, *Stories*, 113 (see also 110–11).

before God in the temple to show honor and homage, in the time of the storytellers the disciple appears before his master.¹⁵²

Given the second story's explicit deploying of "receiving the face" of the master, which alludes to the previously discussed Deuteronomy 31:14 and to the *re'iyah* in Exodus 23:17, and also the earlier reading (*b. Hagigah* 2b) of *yir'eh* that stresses the need for both eyes, I certainly press for this interpretation. Add to this the ways in which this story foreshadows, if in inverse fashion, the ocular dynamics in *b. Hagigah* 5b, as well as the ocular power of the sages against Rava in *b. Hagigah* 5a, and this story about R. Yose is yet another example of the overall transference in this tractate from the ocular encounter with God to the encounter with the sage. Thus, R. El'azar's removal and restoration of his student's "eye" and R. Yose's consequent (dis)ability to see his "face" during the festival is manifestly and tightly linked to the Bavli's severally iterated characterization of *re'iyah* as a facial and ocular pilgrimage encounter. We find the equation of festival pilgrimage to master and God made explicit elsewhere in the Bavli:

R. Isaac says, "A man is obligated (*hayyav*) to receive the face of his teacher (*lehaqbil pene rabbo*) on the pilgrimage festival (*baregel*)."¹⁵³

This implicitly transfers the festal *hiyyuv* of *re'iyat pene ha'adon* to the face of sage. Though Palestinian texts do equate seeing the face of the sage with that of God, we find nothing quite like this. This, along with the fact that there are no parallels to the ocular/facial episodes in *b. Hagigah* 3b, and the heavily reworked *b. Hagigah* 5b, indicates that the particular trend of transferring *re'iyah* onto the face of the sage is a (Amoraic and later) Babylonian phenomenon.¹⁵⁴

Conclusion

We have traced the career of the biblical commandment to see God's face thrice yearly. In so doing we have probed how the Tannaim and later rabbis across Palestine and Babylonia conceived of God gazing. The Tannaitic laws

¹⁵² Rubenstein notes that while there are other compelling redactional reasons for the placement of this *sugya*, there can be "multiple connections between texts and their redactional contexts" (Rubenstein, *Stories*, 113).

¹⁵³ *B. Rosh Hashanah* 16b (paralleled in *b. Sukkah* 27b, which also has a narrative about R. Ilay receiving the face of R. El'iezer b. Hisma in Lod).

¹⁵⁴ Rubenstein sees the aggadic *sugya* in *b. Hagigah* 3b as Stammaitic but concedes that it may be late Amoraic. Chapter 6 treats Palestinian statements about seeing sages' faces, but these are descriptions or exhortations, not prescriptions, and do not necessarily refer to festival pilgrimage.

of *re'iyah*, elaborated in the tractate of *Hagigah* and elsewhere, continue the active sense of vision inaugurated in the biblical sources. At the same time, the Tosefta and Mishnah treat contemporary visionary quests as dangerous. The *Sifre* lays the ground for the Bavli's emphatic mirroring vision. While the Yerushalmi fails to elaborate this possibility, it nonetheless understands *re'iyah* to involve seeing on the part of the pilgrim. The Bavli brings the earlier focus on the body of the pilgrim, together with the *Sifre's* mirroring principle of seeing and being seen, into a radically reciprocal vision along with an explicit and divine anthropomorphism. The Bavli's construction of a thoroughgoing homovisuality, with its promotion of a perfect male body gazing at its divine double, sets the tone of much of *b. Hagigah*, which is as much a lament and meditation on the loss of God's face as it is a bid for its transference to the face of the sage.

Through its concatenation of law and narrative, the Bavli produces a present suffused with a sense of loss, desire, and expectation. At the same time, it acknowledges the political conditions in which the cessation of temple visitation has transpired, by confronting the crisis of God's absent face with narratives with imperial figures and challenging, supersessionist, *minim*. Just as Rava reads the vicissitudes of his own life by referring to divine visuality (as well as to rabbinic vision), so too does (not) seeing God become for the rabbis, a means by which to understand and frame the present.

In many Near Eastern pieties, the gods were "all-seeing."¹⁵⁵ However, for some the god's capacity to see was inversely related to the human ability to see him; god was the "unseen seer."¹⁵⁶ In rabbinic culture, this conception of a God who sees everything but is not readily visible was sustained in part by a story about reciprocal vision between God and humans that was set in the distant past and alleviated by the promise of its eventual restoration (at least for the righteous or rabbinic few). In the next chapter we will see how the present-day imbalance of vision signified a deeper imbalance between humanity and divinity, which the rabbis also cast in gendered and

¹⁵⁵ For epithets that highlight the power of divine vision, see: Genesis 16:13; Psalms 33:18; *Ecclesiasticus* 15:18–19; 2 *Maccabees* 3:39, 7:35; Homer, *Iliad* 3.276–77; Hesiod, *Works and Days* 267 (Zeus's all-seeing eye); Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, 1045–6 (Zeus *pantoptas*). Similarly, in Zoroastrian sources Ahura-Mazda is all-seeing (*Yasna*, 31:13; 45:4 and *Yāšt* 1:8, 12, 15; Boyce, "Ahura Mazda"), as is Mithra (who has ten thousand eyes; *Yāšt* 10:7, 13; Sick, "Mit(h)ra(s) and the myths of the sun," 432–67).

¹⁵⁶ For divine epithets that emphasize God's invisibility, see, e.g., Hebrews 11:27; Colossians 1:15. For the combination of divine omni-vision and invisibility, see, e.g., Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 6.5.39, 6.39.2–3; Aristides, *Apology* 4, 13. On these characterizations of God, see Finney, *Invisible God*, 15–38.

eroticized ways.¹⁵⁷ Desire, as we shall see, became one mode through which absent divinity could be visualized by the sages. Such desirous seeing was aided by a combination of memory, fantasy, and postponed gratification. With God as the unseen seer, humans, or at least Israel, became visual objects rather than seeing subjects; in relation to God, all were blind, as embodied by the Bavli's blind rabbinic scholar. To be seen but not to see; so the rabbis understood the Jewish situation after the destruction of the temple.

In the coming chapter we press further on the affective, ritual, and political implications of this particular construction of a historical moment of loss of divine pilgrimage visuality in rabbinic sources. We will also explore other modalities by which they imagined the visuality of the pilgrimage encounter, particularly, a non-homovisual event, in which pilgrims look at particular objects that represent God, without a returning gaze.

¹⁵⁷ For a sense of ocular desire between God and Israel at the crossing of the Red Sea and at Sinai, see *Song of Songs Rabbah* 2:36–40 and Boyarin, “‘This we know,’” 498 (and the rabbinic sources cited therein).

CHAPTER THREE

Heterovisuality, face-bread, and cherubs

As the deer longs for streams of water,
so my soul longs for you, God;
my soul thirsts for God, the living God;
when shall I come to see the face of God?

Psalms 42:2–3¹

In the previous chapter, we explored a homovisual mode in which rabbis imagined pilgrimage past, in terms of a quest for reciprocal vision. However, this was not the only way in which the rabbis imagined God gazing. This chapter tracks how the rabbis conceived of temple pilgrimage in a heterovisual mode, by visualizing divine visuality through cultic display of the “face-bread,” the “table of the face-bread,” and the cherubim. These cult objects and their display were imagined rather differently in Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic circles. We noted in the previous chapter that the Palestinian Amoraim did not take up the possibility of reciprocal homovisuality with the daring of the Babylonians. Here we will see that the Palestinians tended to think in terms of the theophanic function of cult objects, while the Babylonians imagined them in far more dramatic, even erotic, ways. Accordingly, Palestinian and Babylonian sages produced differently inflected accounts of the traumatic loss of these pilgrimage displays. I will suggest that these differences are representative of Palestinian anxieties about the idolatrous taint of cultic objects and of Babylonian worries about divine–human eroticism, respectively.

Many Psalms describe the pilgrim’s progress to Jerusalem and, as scholars have noted, focus on an ultimate visual experience of God, often expressed in terms of seeing God’s face.² As we saw, the rabbis, too, imagined

¹ Some mss. of the Masoretic Text have the active verb, *er’eh* (“I will see”), but most have *era’eh* (“I will appear”).

² Psalms 11:7; 17:15; 24:6; 27:4, 13; 42:3; 63:2–3; 84:5 (cf. Psalms 36:10, “In your light we see light”). On “seeing God” as the “preeminent image for the experience of God in the temple,” see Smith, “Psalms as a book for pilgrims.”

pilgrimage as an unmediated, face-to-face, encounter with the deity, a conception emerging in Tannaitic sources, but most fully realized in Babylonian ones. The rabbis also explored the possibility that seeing God involved gazing at a material object that somehow represented him.³ What we see in their imaginings is a culture of divine display, not only in terms of material representation (how a material object represents the divine) but also in socio-political terms (who gets to mediate or manage access to the divine).⁴ In imagining these visual objects, the rabbis drew from biblical and ancient Near Eastern traditions, while also being inspired by Greco-Roman and later Christian pilgrimage display practices.⁵ Going to see the divine – even in the imaginary realm – was a managed affair. We can think here of the highly regulated and choreographed displays of cultic objects and wondrous sights to be seen (*thaumata*) in the temples described by Pausanias and Aelius Aristides.⁶ As Deborah Steiner points out, the staged concealment and closely managed exposure of cult images and objects replicated “something of the divinity’s own mode of oblique self-representation and the fleeting quality of his self display.”⁷

Such notions of display and spectacle are very much a part of pilgrimage as depicted in *t. Menahot* 13:19, which describes how the gold plaques that covered the *ulam* were folded and laid out on the ascent to the temple mount during the pilgrimage, “so that people might see their beautiful and faultless workmanship.”⁸ Similar language is applied to the display of a new *parokhet* in *m. Sheqalim* 8:4. In *m. Sukkah* 5:1, we are told, “Whoever has not seen the rejoicing of the *bet hasho’avah* has never seen rejoicing,” and in later sources we find Tannaitic traditions declaring, “Whoever has not seen the temple standing has never seen a beautiful building” and, “Whoever has

³ Some biblical scholars believe that *panim* refers to an image that resided in the temple (Uehlinger, “Anthropomorphic cult statuary”). Of course the distinction between cult image and what it represents was not absolute.

⁴ We will see that the rabbis ascribe a mediating function to the temple priests. On the question of material representations of the divine, see Ando, *Matter of the Gods*.

⁵ On Mesopotamian cultic display, which involved processing the cult image to expose it to those outside the temple rather than inviting laypeople inside, see Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 187; Bidmead, *Akītu Festival*; Oshima, “The Babylonian God Marduk”; Dick, “Mesopotamian cult statue.” For an argument that a cult statue of Yahweh was taken in procession in the first temple, see Niehr, “In search of Yahweh’s cult statue.” On evidence of pilgrimage in Persia (inscriptions at Persopolis), see de Jong, “One nation,” 234. On evidence of pilgrimage graffiti in the Dura Europos synagogue, see Fine, “Jewish identity.”

⁶ For examples of highly choreographed and visually restricted access to gods’ images, often mediated through priests, see Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 2.10.2–3; 2.10.4; 6.20.3; 6.25.2; 8.4.4–6; 9.16.6; 9.25.3; 10.35.7. For additional examples, see Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 88, and on temple access, see Corbett, “Greek temples.” On Aelius Aristides, the cult of Asclepius, and pilgrimage viewing and display, see Petsalis-Diomidis, *Truly Beyond Wonders*.

⁷ Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 87. ⁸ See also *b. Pesahim* 57a. Cf. Mark 13:1.

not seen Herod's temple has never seen a beautiful building."⁹ In Greco-Roman and rabbinic terms, a cultic visual experience should intertwine the sacred with the wondrous and spectacular.

Pilgrimage could involve the exposure of the sacred to the pilgrim's eager eyes as well as the pilgrim's physical entry into sacred space. As discussed earlier, this could entail a temporary suspension of customary rules that excluded not only the layperson's bodily presence but also his gaze from the sacred. In the case of the Jerusalem temple, biblical and rabbinic sources agree that entry into the holy of holies was to be highly regulated (Leviticus 16:2; Numbers 1:51, 3:3–10; *m. Yoma* 5:1) and that even gazing at the sacred contents was forbidden (Numbers 4:19–20).¹⁰ *M. Middot* 4:5 describes how artisans were lowered into the holy of holies in baskets so that they would not “feast their eyes on the chamber of the holy of holies.”¹¹ Josephus expresses this horror of transgressing spatial and ocular boundaries, and looking at the contents of the inner sanctum, in his description of Pompey's entry into the holy of holies.¹²

As mentioned, one way the rabbis imagined that Israelite pilgrims fulfilled the injunction “to see the face of the Lord,” the mitzvah of *re'iyat panim*, was by going to see a particular cult object.¹³ Such cult objects are described in Exodus 25:23–30, where the term *leḥem hapanim* first appears: “You shall set upon the table the face-bread (*leḥem panim*), before me always (*lefanay tamid*).”¹⁴ The face-bread is so called because it is positioned in front of the holy of holies in which the deity (or his face)

⁹ *B. Sukkah* 51b and *b. Bava Batra* 4a. ¹⁰ 1 Samuel 2:19.

¹¹ In Leviticus 16:2, God declares that entering the holy of holies results in mortal danger, because he appears there. See *y. Bikkurim* 2:1, 64c; *b. Pesahim* 26a. In this last source, the Talmud raises the question of whether sight, sound, and smell count as *me'ilah* (trespass or illicit benefit derived from sacred property).

¹² Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum*, 1.152; *Antiquitates Judaicae*, 14.71–72 (hereafter, all Josephus references are to the Loeb editions, as are translations unless otherwise noted). Note that the holy of holies was only supposed to be furnished with the sacred ark and cherubim during the first temple and that it was supposed to have been empty by this later period.

¹³ The Samaritan Targum transforms the phrase the “face of God” (*pene ha'adon YHWH*) into the “ark of God” (*godam aron YHWH*). In rabbinic sources the pilgrims were shown (*mar'in*) the “face-bread” (*leḥem hapanim*) and the “face table” (*shulḥan hapanim*) upon which it lay. *Y. Hagigah* 1:1, 76a (just *panim*); *y. Hagigah* 3:8, 79d; *b. Hagigah* 26b; *b. Yoma* 21b; *b. Menahot* 29a. Given the absence of cultic objects in the second temple holy of holies, the objects in the *hekhal* would have been logical candidates.

¹⁴ In late-antique Aramaic translations of the Bible such as *Targum Onqelos*, *Targum Neofiti*, and the Peshitta, we find *panim* translated as *appayah*, that is, “face(s)” as opposed to “interior.” *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, however, translates *leḥem panim* as “bread of the interior,” with *panim* translated *gavva'ah* (interior). In *m. Menahot* 11:4, Ben Zoma explains that the bread was so called because it was supposed to have (sur)faces (*sheyehe lo panim*). Rashi understands it as, “It should have many faces/surfaces looking here and there, to all sides of the building.” See Hayward, “Targum Pseudo-Jonathan,” and Kane, “Bread of the presence.”

resides (*lefanay*, or facing me). The linguistic and substantive association between seeing the face (*re'iyat panim*) and showing the face-bread (*lehem hapanim*) is cultivated in rabbinic sources.

Both the Yerushalmi and Bavli take up the theophanic elements suggested by these traditions. Two comments in *y. Hagigah* suggest that the face-bread was an object of cultic display. First, Resh Laqish explains that the table holding the face-bread was susceptible to impurity “because they would take it out and show it to the pilgrims (*mar'in oto le'ole regalim*).”¹⁵ This statement supposes that in a cult obsessed with purity and sanctity, the priests would nonetheless take the face-bread and its table out of the sanctuary to display to the pilgrims.¹⁶ This accords with an earlier passage, in which an Amora asks another, “Where would they show the face (*mar'im panim*): on the temple mount or in the [temple] courtyards?”¹⁷ The rabbinic reading of Exodus 34:23 in the active verb *yir'eh* (“All your males *shall see* the face of the Lord God”) means that the pilgrim is to see some kind of *panim*. While the Yerushalmi does not imagine a reciprocal visual encounter with the divine, it includes teachings that the pilgrims saw the *lehem hapanim*. The suggestion that Jews saw something particularly theophanic in the face-bread and its display table is borne out by second-century (and earlier) numismatic evidence.¹⁸ As Dan Barag has noted, some of the coins minted by Jews during the Bar Kokhba revolt use a standard iconographic composition: a schematic depiction of a shrine façade within whose columns stands an image of the god.¹⁹ Remarkably, on the Jewish coins we find a depiction of the face-bread displayed on the table in the place where the cult image is usually depicted.

¹⁵ *y. Hagigah* 3:8, 79d.

¹⁶ As discussed in the previous chapter, this along with additional evidence, such as that in the *Temple Scroll* (11QT^a) (ed. Yadin, vol. III, 11); *m. Hagigah* 3:8; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 3.123–25; coins minted by Jews during the Bar Kokhba revolt, and POxy V 840, leads Knohl, Sussman, and others to suggest that there was a conflict about lay participation in temple cult on festivals days.

¹⁷ *y. Hagigah*, 1:1, 76a. The theophanic character of temple vessels for the rabbis is confirmed by an Amoraic deliberation in *y. Hagigah* 3:8, 79d, in which the quantity of sacred vessels is said to correspond to the number of times God's name occurs in certain prophetic writings.

¹⁸ Barag, “Table of the showbread.” The particular coins were apparently only issued in the final part of Bar Kokhba's revolt. See Meshorer, *Ancient Jewish Coinage*, pl. 55. Anderson, “Towards a theology,” Knohl, “Post-biblical sectarianism,” and others attempt to reconstruct actual second temple practice and argue that the face table (and other furniture) was displayed to the pilgrims' gaze on the festivals. I am less interested in trying to use later sources to reconstruct second temple practice. My concern, along with Fine, is to understand how the later rabbis imagined temple pilgrimage. With this perspective in mind, I note a rise in the graphic nature of the rabbinic imaginary and seek to understand such shifts by looking at the cultural situation contemporary to the rabbis and others.

¹⁹ Barag, “Table of the showbread,” 276.

We cannot necessarily draw a direct line between these earlier iconographic depictions of the theophanic function of face-bread, the suggestive allusions in *m. Hagigah* 3:8 (“They say to them [those who are immersing the temple implements], ‘Be careful lest you touch the table.’”), and the more explicit references in the two Talmuds.²⁰ Regardless, as Steven Fine writes, for the rabbis, “cult objects served as Jewish replacements for images of the god, the viewing of temple appurtenances being parallel to the viewing of sculptural cult objects in pagan temples.”²¹ In the specific case of the face-bread and table, we find that the rabbis made sense of the biblical injunction to see God’s face (*re’iyat panim*) by envisioning the showing of the temple accoutrements of the face: the face-bread (*leḥem hapanim*) and the face table, upon which it lay (*shulḥan hapanim*).²²

A somewhat enigmatic teaching seems to make this very argument about the theophanic function of viewing in *re’iyah*:

Said R. Joshua b. Levi: from where do we know that whoever fulfills the commandment of *re’iyah* it is as if (*ke’ilu*) he receives the face of the *shekhinah*? From this [verse]: “Three times a year all your males shall see the face of the Lord God” (Exodus 23:14).²³

We find the formula “he receives the face of the *shekhinah*” in both Tannaitic and later rabbinic writings, in which seeing God is either equated with the fulfillment of a certain commandment (charity, fringes, blessing the moon, *re’iyah*) or is promised as its reward.²⁴ Shlomo Naeh argues that

²⁰ See n. 13, above and also pp. 49–50.

²¹ Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 152. Fine suggests that, despite its significance, the face-bread and table did not persist as theophanic iconography because they were not visually bold, unlike the menorah, for example.

²² Whether or not the rabbis inherited such traditions, they seem to have thought of their display in terms of contemporaneous pilgrimage practices.

²³ *Y. Hagigah* 1:1, 76a.

²⁴ The formula is “everyone who does x, it is as if he (*ke’ilu hu*; or, ‘he merits to,’ *zokhe u-*) receives the face of the *shekhinah* (*meqabbil maqbil pene shekhinah*).” Examples include *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma’el, Amaleq* 1 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 196); see parallel at *y. ‘Erubin* 5:1, 22b (“Whoever receives the face of his friend, it is as if he receives the face of the *shekhinah*”); *Sifre Numbers* 115 (ed. Horowitz, 126; see parallels at *y. Berakhot* 1:2, 3a and *b. Menahot* 43b) (“Whoever fulfills the mitzvah of fringes, *tsitsit*, it is as if he receives the face of the *shekhinah*”); *Leviticus Rabbah* 23:13 (ed. Margalit, 11:548) (“Whoever sees something sexually improper, *devar ‘ervah*, and does not feast his eyes upon it, he merits to receive the face of the *shekhinah*”); *Genesis Rabbah* 63:6 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:684) (“Whoever receives the face of an elderly man, it is as though he receives the face of the *shekhinah*”); *b. Berakhot* 64a (“Whoever leaves the synagogue and goes into the house of study to learn Torah, he merits to receive the face of the *shekhinah*”); *b. Sanhedrin* 42a (“Whoever blesses the new month at the proper time, it is as though he receives the face of the *shekhinah*”); *b. Bava Batra* 10a (“A person who gives a *perutah* to a poor person, he merits to receive the face of the *shekhinah*”). Most instances cited above have *zokhe* (“he merits”), except for *b. Sanhedrin* 42a; *y. ‘Erubin* 5:1, 22b; *y. Berakhot* 1:2, 3a (*b. Menahot* 43b has *zokhe*) and our present case. Note that R. Joshua relies on a

this *derashah* only makes sense if there is a Qal reading of *yir'eh*.²⁵ While it is true that this *derashah* conforms to similar ones, we can ask why R. Joshua seems, in some ways, to qualify the plain meaning of “seeing the face of the Lord God” with “as if,” when its plain meaning indicates literal looking at God. One way to understand this statement of R. Joshua b. Levi is in the context of what we have outlined so far. In other words, he refers to the *re'iyah* as the viewing of the table (and its contents) that is also mentioned in this tractate, and then goes on to find biblical support for this cult object as effectively theophanic. This coheres with the intimations in the Yerushalmi about the content of *re'iyat panim*.²⁶ It also confirms our findings in the previous chapter about the lack of evidence in the Yerushalmi of an unmediated visual encounter with God.

Another possibility is that R. Joshua refers to the sacrifice of *re'iyah*, so that his claim is that sacrificing, on its own, is the equivalent of *re'iyat panim*.²⁷ On either of these readings, the effect is to take the Bible's directly visual statement and to qualify it by understanding “he shall see God's face” as *if* (analogy) rather than as a straightforward occurrence (ontology), in other words, by turning a bold equation into a simile. If this is correct, then what we have is a more reticent rabbinic position about the bolder theological claim that *re'iyah* simply *is* the vision of God's face. Another possibility that bears mention is that the *ke'ilu* represents a later insertion designed to soften an earlier, more radically visual conception of the *re'iyah* encounter.²⁸

An examination of Babylonian and Palestinian traditions sheds more light on the face-bread and table (see Table 1).

The Bavli effectively combines three Palestinian traditions into a single unit: the tradition that *re'iyah* involved a temple implement (the face

semantic equivalence that is present throughout rabbinic sources, i.e. that “seeing” is equivalent to “receiving the face of.” See Sadan, “Substitution” and *b. Bava Batra* 10a in which *ro'eh pene hamelekh* (“seeing the face of the king”) is analogous to *meqabbel pene hashekhinah* (“receiving the face of the shekhinah”) on the basis of Psalms 17:15, “I, in righteousness, will gaze at your face” (*ani betsedeq ebeze fanekhab*).

²⁵ Naeh, “En em lamasoret,” 415. ²⁶ *Y. Hagigah* 1:1, 76a (just *panim*); *y. Hagigah* 3:8, 79d.

²⁷ See *b. Sukkah* 45a, in which the fulfillment of Sukkot rituals are said to be “as if one built an altar and sacrificed upon it.”

²⁸ This may have too radically physicalized *re'iyah* for later tastes. In fact, the *ke'ilu* simplifies the exegesis almost to the point of rendering it redundant. Without the *ke'ilu*, the midrash is more opaque and requires the exegetical “work” usually demanded. See Fox, “As if with a finger,” who shows that, in a similar instance, the “as if” (*ke'ilu*) was placed there by a later hand. See also, Bar Ilan, “The hand of God,” who argues that original rabbinic traditions containing conceptions of divine anthropomorphism were edited due to theological unease; and Fishbane, “The sense of not reading,” esp. 181, and Fishbane, *Biblical Myths and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, Appendix 2, esp. 255, 372.

Table 1

<i>b. Hagigah</i> 26b (par. <i>b. Yoma</i> 21b; <i>b. Menahot</i> 29a)	<i>y. Hagigah</i> 3:8, 79d
Resh Laqish said: Why is it written, "On the pure table" (Leviticus 24:6)? This implies that it is susceptible to impurity. How is this possible? It is a wooden vessel made to be stationary and therefore is not susceptible to impurity.	R. Ami said in the name of R. Shim'on b. Laqish: why was the table susceptible to impurity?
Rather, this teaches that they would raise it and show the face-bread on it to the pilgrims (<i>mar'in bo le'ole regalim lehem hapanim</i>), and they would say to them: "See how beloved you are before God (<i>re'u hibbatkhem lifne hamaqom</i>)!"	Was it not because they took it out and showed it to the pilgrims (<i>mar'in oto le'ole regalim</i>)? (Cf. <i>y. Hagigah</i> 1:1, 76a: They would show the face (<i>mar'im panim</i>) in the 'azarah.)
Its removal was as its [initial] arrangement. As R. Joshua b. Levi said: A great miracle was wrought with the face-bread – its removal was as its [initial] arrangement, as it says, "To place hot bread on the day it is taken away" (1 Samuel 21:7).	<i>y. Sheqalim</i> , 6:4, 50a: This is one of the miracles wrought in the temple: just as it was hot when they laid it down, so was it hot when they took it out, as it says, "To place hot bread on the day it is taken away" (1 Samuel 21:7). R. Joshua b. Levi says; we do not cite miracles (<i>en mazkirim ma'ase nissim</i>). ^a

^a Note that in both the Yerushalmi and the Bavli, R. Joshua b. Levi either conveys or comments upon the miracle of the face-bread. In *y. Sheqalim*, he refers to the rule that miracles are not probative for halakhic purposes (conveyed by R. Meir in *t. Yevamot* 14:7, cf. *b. Berakhot* 60a, *b. Yevamot* 121b and *b. Hullin* 43a).

table) being displayed outside of its usual context (in the 'azarah, the outer courtyard of the temple); the tradition that the face table was intimately connected, both linguistically and visually, to God's face; and the tradition that there was something miraculous about the face-bread.²⁹ The Bavli elaborates this laconic but suggestive set of Palestinian traditions into a carefully choreographed cultic display, complete with an explicit priestly exhortation to the pilgrims to see (*re'u*) the face-bread in a particular way.³⁰

²⁹ The reason I read the cultic display as part of *re'iyah* rather than as just part of generic festive display of temple finery is the linguistic association of "*mar'in panim*" and bread of the face. The Bavli traditions with their explicit instruction to see such objects as marks of God's love further single out these displays. Miraculous incorruptibility of a holy object is a common trope. Compare to similar displays of the "freshness" of saints' and holy persons' relics, e.g. the body of R. Ele'azar b. R. Shim'on in *b. Bava Metsi'a* 84b; Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 2.3; and Ambrose, *Letters*, 22.2, 11, 12.

³⁰ This staging of spectacle and this exhortation to visual intimacy with God is mirrored in the Bavli's account of how the cherubs in the holy of holies were displayed, as we will discuss below.

Like the Yerushalmi, the Bavli treats the viewing of the face-bread in the context of purity concerns (whether the table is susceptible to impurity). The connection between viewing and touch, the latter of which conveys impurity, can be explained by the late-antique notion of extramissive vision as dangerously intertwined with touch.³¹ Accounts of pilgrimage piety and liturgical display practices from the fourth century CE describe viewing and touching practices aimed toward sacred display objects and also provide a window onto the dangers of boundary crossing that such display entailed.³² The *Itinerarium Egeriae* relates that pilgrims would touch the wood of the cross with their eyes, then lips, but were not allowed to handle it, and how, after one pilgrim not only bowed and kissed but also bit the cross, the relic was zealously guarded.³³ Such anecdotes express the anxiety in both the Christian and the rabbinic imaginations about the possibilities and dangers that pilgrimage display, with its loosening of the customary boundaries of the sacred, could entail.

Scholars have demonstrated a strong link between pilgrimage and vision in Greco-Roman piety.³⁴ The connections between vision and touch, expressed as concern about the transmission of impurity on the part of laypersons, can be illuminated by forms of “tactile piety,”³⁵ including “haptic vision,”³⁶ which took on new life in the fourth century. Robert Wilken and Georgia Frank show how such notions shaped Christian pilgrimage in Palestine, Egypt, Syria, and beyond. It is likely, given the travel of Jews and Christians between Palestine and Mesopotamia, that such forms of piety traversed imperial *limes*.³⁷ Rabbinic concepts of pilgrimage display coincided with such forms of piety.

³¹ Cf. *m. Hagigah* 3:8, in which people are warned not to touch the face table, lest it become impure. In rabbinic law, touch conveyed impurity, but in Zoroastrian and Brahminical religious law, some impurities were thought to be conveyed by sight, in addition to touch (see Chapter 1, n. 83). This also seems to be the case in POxy V 840, a fourth-century fragment of a (possibly) second-century non-canonical gospel, in which a Pharisee reprimands Jesus for coming into the temple “to see the holy vessels” without having taken the necessary purifying steps (Schwartz, “Viewing the holy utensils”). These sources and the Talmudic ones point to a hypersensitivity about vision and purity that may be explained by the notion of extramissive and haptic vision, in which seeing involves the expulsion of rays from the eye that then touch or grasp the object of sight.

³² E.g. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogiae*, 5.22. ³³ *Itinerarium Egeriae*, 37.1, 4.

³⁴ Rutherford, “Theoria and Darsan”; Dillon, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage*; Elsner, “Between mimesis and divine power”; Elsner, “Pausanias”; Rutherford, “Tourism”; Frankfurter (ed.), *Pilgrimage*. See Philo on material and sensory display as a vital part of pilgrimage (*De Specialibus Legibus*, 1.35.193).

³⁵ Wilken, *Land*, 115. ³⁶ Frank, *Memory*, 123–33.

³⁷ On Persian pilgrimage, see n. 5 above. Christians made pilgrimage in Mesopotamia (e.g. Egeria, the Piacenza Pilgrim, and see Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*; Lee, *Information and Frontiers*). On the relationship between Aramaic speaking Christians of Syria and Mesopotamia and the rabbis, see Koltun-Fromm, *Hermeneutics of Holiness*, and Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*; Boyarin, *Socrates*; Becker, *Fear of God*. On Jewish travel between Palestine and Babylonia, see Hezser, *Jewish Travel*, 319–21. On pilgrimage visuality in Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic and Christian sources, see Neis, “Pilgrimage itineraries.”

Intertwined cherubim

An even more striking example of pilgrimage displays in the Babylonian rabbinic imagination occurs in *b. Yoma*. This passage focuses on the cherubim, rather than the face-bread, as visual objects. The cherubim are described in the greatest detail in Exodus 25:18–20 and 1 Kings 6:23–28: they were gold statues, possessed of wings and faces, placed above the ark in the holy of holies.³⁸ In Exodus 25:22, God tells Moses that he will speak to him “from between the two cherubim.”

The Babylonian tradition preserved in *b. Yoma* imagines *re'iyat panim* as a ritualized display wherein the priests would open up the curtain covering the holy of holies to reveal the cherubim (above the ark) in sexual embrace.³⁹ The priests instructed the pilgrims to look at these sculptures of entwined cherubs as a material and embodied manifestation of God's love. This tradition, of which there is not a hint in earlier biblical or Palestinian rabbinic sources, is ascribed to a Babylonian Amora, Rav Qatina.⁴⁰ The tradition, (2) below, is worth quoting in its local context:⁴¹

- (1) Rav Judah contrasted the following biblical verses, “And the ends of the poles were visible,” and “But they could not be seen from outside” (1 Kings 8:8). How so? They were both visible and not visible (*nir'in ve'en nir'in*). Thus was it also taught in a *baraita*: “And the ends of the poles were visible” (1 Kings 8:8). One might think that they did not protrude from their place. To teach us [that they did] the verse says, “The poles projected” (1 Kings 8:8). One might think that they tore through the curtain and stuck out. To teach us [that this was not the case] the verse says, “But they could not be seen from outside” (1 Kings 8:8). How so? They pressed forth, protruded, projected outside the curtain, and were visible (*nir'in*), like a woman's two breasts (*shne dade ha'ishah*), as it says, “My beloved (*dodi*) is to me a bag of myrrh, which lies between my breasts” (Songs of Songs 1:13).⁴²
- (2) Rav Qatina said: When Israel would make pilgrimage (*'olin laregel*), they would roll aside the curtain for them and show them (*mar'in lahem*) the cherubs, which were entwined with one another, and they would say

³⁸ E.g. Exodus 37:7–9; 1 Kings 8:7.

³⁹ *B. Yoma* 54a. This means that *b. Yoma* contains two display traditions (a version of the face-bread display tradition is at 21b).

⁴⁰ The *shulhan hapanim* tradition (*b. Hagigah* 26b; *b. Yoma* 21b; *b. Menahot* 29a) is attributed to a Palestinian Amora of the second generation (Resh Laqish), with a comment of a first generation Amora, whereas the majority of voices in this tradition are ascribed to Babylonian Amoraim (exception is the citation of a *baraita* in (1) and Resh Laqish in (4)).

⁴¹ *B. Yoma* 54a–b.

⁴² See parallels in *t. Yoma* 2:15; *y. Sheqalim* 6:1, 49c; *b. Menahot* 98a–b (attributed to Resh Laqish instead of Rav Judah).

- to them, “See how beloved you are before God (*re’u ḥibbatkhem lifne ḥamaqom*); like the love of man and woman.”
- (3) Rav Ḥisda raised an objection: “But they shall not go inside to see (*lir’ot*) the holy objects” (Numbers 4:20). And Rav Judah said, in the name of Rav: [The verse refers to] the time when the vessels are being put into their cases. Rav Naḥman said: [Let us understand it] by analogy to a bride. As long as she is in her father’s house, she is modest (*tsenu’ah*) with her husband, but when she comes to her father-in-law’s house, she is no longer so modest (*tsenu’ah*) with him . . .
- (4) Resh Laqish said: When the foreigners entered the temple, they saw (*ra’u*) the cherubim entwined with one another. They carried them out to the marketplace and said, “Do these Israelites, whose blessing is a blessing, and whose curse is a curse, occupy themselves with such things?!” Immediately they despised them, as it is said: “All who honored her despised her, because they have seen (*ra’u*) her nakedness (*’ervatah*)” (Lamentations 1:8).⁴³

This concatenation of traditions imagines the visual experience of the temple and its implements through a heady combination of motifs; exposure, concealment, intimacy, eroticism, and shame are all on display here. With the exception of Resh Laqish’s statement, these traditions are all attributed to Babylonian Amoraim. Parts (1) and (4) have parallels in Tannaitic and Palestinian Amoraic sources.⁴⁴ Even so, particularly in (4), there are important differences between the Palestinian and Babylonian iterations of these traditions, from which a distinctively Babylonian rabbinic take on divine visuality begins to take shape. Furthermore, while the feminization of God

⁴³ See parallels in *Lamentations Rabbah*, *Petiḥta* (Proem) 9 (ed. Buber, 4b), *Pesiqta Derav Kahana* 19 (ed. Mandelbaum, 1:301). The use of *me’urin* is inspired by 1 Kings 7:36, which describes the cherubim as *kema’ar ish veloyot*. The meaning of this difficult phrase is debated by biblical scholars, with some suggesting to emend the text as per the similar phrase in 1 Kings 7:30. The root is *’r-y*, which can mean “pour out,” “expose,” or “bare” (cf. *’ervah*). The Aramaic *’r-y* also has the meanings of pour out and attach (Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1116, and Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Babylonian Aramaic*, 881). In Rabbinic Hebrew, we find *’arah* used in a sexual sense, akin to biblical sources such as Leviticus 20:18. E.g. *m. Yevamot* 6:1, the case of a man having sex with his *yevamah*: “It is the same whether he enters (*hama’areh*) or completes.” *B. Yevamot* 54a points to Leviticus 20:18 as the source of this usage. In this particular case, the term seems to distinguish someone who is engaged in the act of penetration from someone who has ejaculated, that is, has “completed” the act. In fact, immediately preceding Resh Laqish’s teaching in *b. Yoma* 54b, *Rabbah b. Rav Shela* paraphrases 1 Kings 7:36 as “like a man embracing his companion,” reading the biblical *veloyot*, which some biblical scholars translate as “wreaths” as *levayah shelo*. The gender of the companion is unknown, though the noun *levayah* is feminine. I thank Shaye Cohen for his suggestion, taking into account the several senses of *’arah* (pour out, bare, etc.), that this may imply sexual extramission. The term is also used in the sense of “attach” or “join,” e.g. *m. Tevul Yom* 3:1; *m. ’Uqtsin* 3:8; *t. Kelim* 1:13; *b. Gittin* 20b; *b. Hullin* 129b. See Rashi on *b. Yoma* 54a s.v. *me’urin*, where he cites *m. ’Uqtsin* 3:8 and *m. Betsah* 7:1, referring to the term as “an expression of cleaving” (*leshon dibbuq*).

⁴⁴ *T. Yoma* 2:15; *Baraita Demeleket Hamishkan* 7 (ed. Kirschner, 182–83); *y. Sheqalim* 6:1, 49c; *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:62. There is a thin editorial layer (cf. threefold adjectives in 1, *b. Yoma* 21b in 2).

in (1), is acknowledged as a *baraita* and is also paralleled in Palestinian sources, it is enhanced and compounded in the Bavli by the strategic juxtaposition of the traditions that follow.

In (1), the complex interplay of the visibility and concealment of the rods of the ark ("they were both visible and not visible") is highlighted in both the Babylonian Talmud and the Palestinian parallels. Questioning the apparently contradictory biblical verse in 1 Kings 8, the midrashist describes the manner in which the poles of the ark protruded from under the cover of the curtain at the entrance to the holy of holies.⁴⁵ This mix of coy exposure and reticence embodies the conundrum of divine sightings in biblical sources.⁴⁶ Such teasing visibility is compared to seeing the outline of a woman's breasts and reinforced with the erotic imagery of the Song of Songs.⁴⁷

In the Babylonian Talmud's image, the *parokhet* (ark curtain) has the same function as drapery in both art and poetry, which is "not so much to conceal nudity as to enhance the loveliness that lies behind, and incite the spectator's longing to gain close access."⁴⁸ Furthermore, the object of

⁴⁵ The threefold repetition of verbs in the Babylonian version – *dohaqin* ("pressed forth"), *boletin* ("protruded"), *yotse'in* ("projected outside") – dramatizes the pressing, protrusion, and expansion of the staves into the *parokhet*. These three verbs correspond to and reverse the initial three verbs: *zazin* ("protrude"), *meqare'in* ("tore through"), *yotse'in* ("stuck out"). Cf. *Baraita Demelekheth Hamishkan* 7 (ed. Kirschner, 182–83), in which the protrusion is such that the doors of the holy of holies cannot be closed; this is a daring image of the ark extending out of its sacred space.

⁴⁶ E.g. the various theophanies of Exodus 19–24. Exodus 25:22 and Numbers 7:89 describe God speaking to Moses from between the two cherubim, and a host of earlier midrashim treat the ark and cherubim in terms of divine revelation. Some midrashim read Song of Songs 1:13, quoted in the Bavli here, to suggest that the *shekhinah* resided between the two rods (or cherubim), or that Abraham was the "bag of myrrh" lying between the two breasts (staves), which represent the *shekhinah* and an angel. See *Song of Songs Rabbah* 6:12 and *Song of Songs Zuta* 1:13. *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:2 sees the staves as an extension of the *shekhinah*: "Thus, until the temple was built the *shekhinah* was compressed between the two staves of the ark. When the temple was built: 'The poles projected (lit. were lengthened)' (1 Kings 8:8)." Parts (1) and (2) in the Bavli are clearly also indebted to *Sifra Nedavah* 2 (ed. Weiss, 4a): "See (*re'eh*) how the love (*hibbatan*) for Israel affected the Glory, of which it is said 'Behold, I fill heaven and earth!' That is to say, it compressed (*dahaq*) in order to appear (*lera'ot*) over the *kapporet* between the two cherubim."

⁴⁷ The way in which the Babylonian Talmud presents looking, vision, and the imagery (if not the visual simile) of a woman's breast being concealed and yet revealed by drapery here (that is, the notion of clothing revealing the sexual attributes of the body it covers) conforms not just to aspects of Songs, but also to a longstanding theme in Greco-Roman and Persian sculpture and literature. See Avestan *Aban Yašt* 5.127, in which the goddess Anahita is praised for her beauty and described in the following terms: "She has girded her waist, that her breasts may be of a fair shape, that they may be elegant" (trans. De Jong, "Zoroastrian Misogyny," 20). For prominent breasts as a feature of female beauty, see Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Erotic literature"; *Hadōxt Nask* 2.9; De Jong, "Zoroastrian Misogyny," 20. On the depiction of women or Anahita in ancient Persian art see De Jong, 20, n. 17; Daems, "Iconography of Pre-Islamic Women in Iran;" Grabar, *Sasanian Silver*.

⁴⁸ Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 231 and 235–36. On clothing as sexually provocative, see Stewart, *Art, Desire, and the Body*, 102, 128; Cohen, "Divesting."

the gaze (the poles of the ark) is gendered in the feminine in no uncertain terms, and the analogy in (3) endows the beholder with a masculine gaze (a husband gazing at his new bride). The suggestive image of protrusion in (1) takes on additional erotic and dynamic force when considered with the account about the cherubim that follows.⁴⁹

Part (3) reinforces the paradoxical, teasing nature of God's visibility, which is conceived in clearly feminine terms by analogy to the way a bride's modesty changes once she moves in with her husband. In (4), the exposure of the insides of the holy of holies to the eyes of invasive "foreigners" is described, again in feminine terms, as the shameful seeing of *'ervah* (genital nakedness): "All who honored *her* despised *her*, because they have seen *her 'ervah*."⁵⁰ Of course, there is an elision of visual object and subject implied by these sequences: Who exactly is the object of the gaze in the innermost sanctum, God or Israel? The passage teases us with both and all possibilities, and this last unit is no exception. Israel has been exposed in the most shamefully feminized terms, and yet, the presence hidden in the holy of holies is actually the divine.

This progression of traditions effectively works as a striptease: First, we see a woman's breasts protruding through fabric; then, through the spectatorship of the Israelite pilgrims and through the framing instructions of the priests, we gain a voyeuristic gaze onto an erotic scene. Part (3) tracks the unfolding of this intimacy, describing how a woman moves from modest concealment (and tantalizing invitation) to total exposure, as her beloved transitions from fiancé to spouse and as their love becomes the "love between a man and woman." The juxtaposition of sex and sight is striking in and of itself; all the more so when used to think about relations between humans and the divine, and perhaps even more so when God is figured as a woman whose nudity is increasingly exposed to Israelite (read: Jewish) eyes.⁵¹ While biblical and rabbinic traditions exist that eroticize the

⁴⁹ The transformation of the verbs from the perfect to the participle, which conveys a habitual or iterative sense, also has the effect of emphasizing the animate and supernatural nature of these extending staves. When juxtaposed with the breast imagery, this suggests arousal.

⁵⁰ Cf. "Of all the calamities of that time, none so deeply affected the nation as the exposure to alien eyes of the holy place, hitherto screened from view" (Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 1.152). Compare to Ambrose's account of Thecla's martyrdom and the way the gaze operates therein with "the male onlookers who gaze upon the spectacle of her nakedness" (Burrus, "Reading Agnes," 32–33). On the defiant, masculine gaze of Perpetua, who "stared with a virile gaze directly into the eyes of her attackers, and not with the submissive look of a *matrona*," see Baert, "More than an image," 141–42. See also Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 69–71, on exposure, modesty, and the lustful male gaze in *b. 'Avodah Zarah* 18a.

⁵¹ The sex/sight relation is arguably implied in the term *zan 'enav* (lit. "nourished his eyes"), which is often used in the context of illicit sexual situations, as well as inappropriate gazing at God

relationship between God and Israel in conventional terms of God/man and Israel/woman, the dynamics of the gaze here, coupled with the preceding debates, unsettle such assumed gendering.⁵² The sexualized and gendered dimensions of late-antique vision are on abundant display throughout this passage, which adds an instability to the expected gendered, sexualized, and even human–divine dynamics of vision.

The perspectival shifts between (1) and (4) also do important work here. In (1), primarily midrashic exegesis, there is no narrative frame as such. The text refers to sight but to no particular viewer, and the implied viewer/reader beholds divine body parts as they poke through the curtain. In (2), the curtain is rolled aside to reveal a three-way relationship, mediated by the priests, and we see Israelites gazing at sculptures engaged in sexual embrace.⁵³ The text here achieves an identificatory gaze: The reader sees through the eyes of the Israelites, who themselves look upon the erotic scene. The relationship between God and Israel is eroticized but also distanced, or framed, by the viewing of proxies – the cherubim – which stand in for God and Israel.⁵⁴ Even so, the pilgrim-spectators are told by the priests not only to look at the image as a witnessing third-party, but also to identify with one of the cherubim.⁵⁵ If we take the gendering here seriously

(Schäfer, *Origins*, 204–5; Wolfson, *Speculum*, 42–43; Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus*, 188–96). See the explanation for the deaths of Nadav and Avihu who “feasted their eyes” on the *shekhinah*, *Leviticus Rabbah* 20:10 (ed. Margalio, 1:466); cf. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan ad Exodus* 24:10–11.

⁵² Boyarin, “‘This we know,’” 491–96; Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus*, 59–136.

⁵³ This passage deliberately picks up and echoes the verbs of the previous exegesis: *nir'in*, *zazin*, *meqare'in*, *dohaqin*, *boletin*, *yose'in*, and here: *me'urin*, *keruvim*, *mar'in*, *megallelin*, *olin*. On the use of curtains in late antiquity for concealing and revealing statues and for their ability to “change a mere appearance into an epiphany, the ritualized act of appearance,” see Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 80–83. On curtains and concealment in the Persian context, and the more contemporaneous model from which Roman emperors and perhaps even Babylonian rabbis may have borrowed ideas of the economy of royal/divine viewing, see Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 4.26. On the Sassanian, or perhaps Parthian, term *pargod*, the curtain that screened the king from his subjects, see Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation*, 5.

⁵⁴ On sexual terms used in relation to the cherubim in biblical texts and in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Hepner, *Legal Friction*, 715. For a different view on the cherubim and their representation of the state of the Jewish–divine relationship, see *b. Bava Batra* 99a, which reconciles the positions of two Palestinian Amoraim to say that when Israel fulfills the will of God the cherubim face each other and when they sin they do not. For the view that the cherubim are two males, one with a small face and the other with a large face, see *b. Sukkah* 5b.

⁵⁵ Just a few important examples of film studies scholarship on such spectator/viewer identification theories include Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*; Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*; Cowie, “Fantasia” (on multiple identifications for spectators); Silverman, *Threshold*; Bal and Lewin, “Narrating”; Aumont, “Point of view,” 2–3. Narratologists and film theorists have helped us understand the different devices by which texts, whether film texts or literary texts, allow the reader/spectator to see through different frames. For example, they have distinguished between seeing through the camera's eye and diegesis, seeing through the protagonist's eyes. Mieke Bal refers to such shifting subject-positions as “focalizing.” This recalls the Lacanian notion by which the infant forms his

and think of the late-antique equivalence between seeing and extramission, expressed earlier in terms of fears about vision and purity contamination and demonstrated even more literally in the next chapter, then the gazing pilgrim here enacts what his, presumably male, cherub is already in the process of doing.⁵⁶ Finally, in (4), we witness the violating gaze of the “foreigners.” Here the reader identifies not as a viewer but with the shamefully exposed visual object.⁵⁷ Daniel Donoghue reminds us that the shame in scopophilia, the pleasure in looking, “has an essential social component” and that it “accompanies the anxiety of being caught in the act.”⁵⁸

Remarkably, the only gaze missing in this passage is God’s, who is entirely a visual object and not a seeing subject. The gendering of humans (male pilgrims) vis-à-vis God in this passage conforms to a gendered viewing dynamic in which the masculine gaze beholds a feminine object.⁵⁹ We will explore this dynamic and its unsettling in rabbinic sources in Chapter 4. Theorists of the gaze and film theorists have, since the 1970s, suggested that a heavily gendered model of seeing and being seen predominates in viewing culture: The gaze is often conceived of as masculine or phallic, and the visual object as feminine or passive. Laura Mulvey famously offered this paradigm, combining it with Freudian and Lacanian notions of pleasure, scopophilia, and subject formation.⁶⁰ Naturally, the model has undergone critique and revision of its rigid gender and erotic binaries, and its dogmatic ahistoricism, among other things.⁶¹ It is nonetheless a useful starting point, and in terms of rabbinic and Greco-Roman culture, a certain kind of active, aggressive, or acquisitive gaze is very often characterized in terms of masculinity, while objects of visual desire are feminine. In some ways,

sense of subjectivity by (mis)identifying himself with his own image (hence a divided self) (Lacan, *Seminaire*).

⁵⁶ Furthermore, it is clear, though implied, that the gathered pilgrims would be male. If we take the location of the viewing seriously, we must be talking about male pilgrims hovering outside of the *hekhal* in the priest-only section of the sanctuary (from the portico/*ulam* and inwards).

⁵⁷ This feeling of shame on being observed looking has been termed the “fourth look” – not one “that can be seen, but a look, imagined by men in the field of the other” or that which “can be represented as the look which constitutes the viewer as visible subject” (Willemsen, “Voyeurism,” 216).

⁵⁸ Donoghue, *Lady Godiva*, 79. For narratives that consider punishment for gazing on (female) deities, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3:131–251 (Actaeon’s sighting of Diana), and Callimachus, *In Lavacrum Palladis* (Hymn 5) 107–18.

⁵⁹ Boyarin uses this kind of gendered analysis of the gaze to talk about the Bavli’s stories about the exposure to the “predatory male gaze” of both the Torah (by R. Ḥanina) and of R. Ḥanina’s daughter. Both are punished for courting the male gaze (Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 69–71).

⁶⁰ Mulvey, “Visual pleasure.”

⁶¹ Just some of the many critiques/revisions of Mulvey include Diawara, “Black spectatorship” (black male viewers resisting spectatorship); hooks, *Black Looks*, 115–31, 195–200 (the oppositional gaze of the black female spectator); Doty, *Making Things Perfectly Queer* (queer viewing), and not least, Mulvey, “Afterthoughts.”

this is seen as the “natural” state of things, even as the rabbis and church fathers try to avert the male gaze and present an alternative model of downcast vision. This often ends up troubling gender, as we will see in Chapter 4. It certainly seems that the rabbis invoke this more obvious model of gendered viewing in *b. Yoma* 54a, moving from female breasts to intercourse, to spousal modesty and intimacy, to the violation and shame of public exposure.⁶²

One last note about the staging of seeing in *b. Yoma* 54a. In (2), the transition from (relative) invisibility to visibility is performed by the priests, who ceremonially roll aside the curtain.⁶³ In cinematic terms, the priests’ performance is analogous to the shower curtain being ripped aside in the murder scene in *Psycho*, or the way that the camera itself and its cross-marks frame the voyeur scenes in *Peeping Tom*. In other words, these works foreground seeing itself in a fashion that points to their own thematic content or representational form.⁶⁴

The performative emphasis on seeing (*re’iyah*) is evident from the repetition of seeing verbs (*umar’in lahem*, “and they show them,” and *re’u*, “See!”) and from the deliberately visual didacticism of the latter command. But there is an important difference between the two pilgrimage display traditions here in *b. Yoma* 54a and in *b. Hagigah* 26b (and parallels). While both the face-bread and the cherubim are signs of God’s love, only in the case of the cherubim are the pilgrims asked to identify with what they see. They are invited to feast their eyes on a representation of themselves engaging with God in a gendered and sexual manner. This entails a breakdown of boundaries together with a curious alienation: The pilgrims participate as voyeuristic spectators in this most intimate scene; they are bidden to watch a visual demonstration of their own relationship with God.⁶⁵ The sexual nature of the Babylonian fantasy about the cherubim, and their subsequent shameful exposure, is thrown into high relief when we compare the Babylonian anecdote with a fifth-century Palestinian version.

⁶² Public shaming is an actionable tort in rabbinic law (*boshet*), as in Roman law (*inuria*). On the gendering of spatial domains, see Baker, *Rebuilding*. The rabbinic tort of visual damage (*hezeq re’iyah*) is also informed by the notion that one’s realm or body can suffer simply by being seen. On the entry into the sanctuary as a kind of penetration, see Branham, “Penetrating the sacred.” Joshua Levinson argues even more vividly for the way in which this was sexualized (Levinson, “Tragedies.”)

⁶³ The violating gaze of the invaders in (4) is in direct contrast to the Jewish gaze in (2).

⁶⁴ This performative or reflexive element is also present in the Babylonian version of the face-bread display tradition, discussed above, and is not found in the Palestinian version.

⁶⁵ The gendering here no doubt has the pilgrims (as the collectivity of Israel) in the position of being woman to God’s man. On the rabbinic usage of the term *hibbah*, see Satlow, *Jewish Marriage*, 233–34; Brenner, *Intercourse*.

Exposing the cherubim: Palestinian idolatry, Babylonian intimacy

In order to better see the different emphases of the Babylonian and Palestinian understanding of the exposure of the cherubim, let us take a closer look at the version of Resh Laqish's statement found in *Lamentations Rabbah*, attributed here to R. Isaac (a Palestinian Amora of the subsequent generation), alongside the version in *b. Yoma* 54b and alongside Rav Qatina's narrative of the exposure of the cherubim in the pilgrimage context (see Table 2).

While vision is certainly not absent from the Palestinian version of this passage, it is more explicitly thematized in the Babylonian traditions. Moreover, while both Palestinian and Babylonian traditions treat the shameful exposure of the cherubim, nowhere in the Palestinian sources are the cherubim described as entwined in amorous embrace; the embarrassment is about idolatry ("worship"), rather than sexual impropriety ("love of man and woman" or "nakedness").⁶⁶ It is the discovery of figurative images in the holy of holies that prompts the gentiles to parade them and declare "see what we found and what they *worship*; behold all faces are alike!"⁶⁷ While an anxiety about gentile accusations of idolatry may also lurk in the Bavli, its explicit emphasis, especially considering the three units that precede (4), is undoubtedly the sexual exposure, both in terms of the discovery of the cherubim *in flagrante delicto* and also in terms of the gentile penetration into the innermost sanctum.⁶⁸

In part (4) of the Bavli passage, the gentiles' misreading of the nature of the cherubic embrace inversely mirrors the priestly injunction in (2) to gaze upon and "see" the erotic love as a mark of divine love. The Palestinian version also uses the language of visual pedagogy, *re'u*, "see," to support the gentiles' enactment of Ezekiel 25:8. Furthermore, the scrupulously scripted

⁶⁶ Compare the Bavli's use of Lamentations 1:8 with *Lamentations Rabbah*'s use of Lamentations 1:10. On Josephus's "erasure" of the cherubim, see Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 82–123.

⁶⁷ *Lamentations Rabbah* opens with the covering of Israel's face in shame in the quotation from Jeremiah, which the midrash links to the specific shameful exposure caused by the foreign entry into the holies. The relationship between the invasive viewing (*nikhnesu*, "they entered," *umatse'u*, "they found," *ra'u*, "they saw") and exposure (*natelu*, "they took," *mahazirin*, "they carried around") is reinforced by Israel's covering its face in shame (*kissetah kelimah panenu*) and the exposure of its "face" with the mocking cry *ha kol appayin shavin*, "Behold, all faces are alike!" Cf. Lieberman, "Palestine," 360, who notices a plausible parody of *veni vidi vici* in *Genesis Rabbah* 78:12 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:932), where a Roman government official sees a salver, desires it, and then appropriates it. See *y. Sanhedrin* 10:2, 28c, in which Menasseh decides to see whether God is any different from an idol, or whether "all faces (*appayya*) are alike."

⁶⁸ Levinson, "Tragedies." For imagery that goes in the other direction, see Jerome, *Epistulae* 22–23, in which Jerome urges Eustochium to guard her virgin body as the temple vessels were guarded from prying eyes.

Table 2

<i>Lamentations Rabbah Petihta</i> (Proem) 9 ^a	<i>b. Yoma</i> 54b	<i>b. Yoma</i> 54b
R. Isaac opened: “We became ashamed when we heard shame, humiliation <u>covered</u> our <u>faces</u> when the foreigners came to the sacred places of the house of God.” (Jeremiah 51:51) You find, that at the time the enemies <u>entered</u> Jerusalem, the Ammonites and Moabites entered with them, as it says: “The adversary has spread out his hand upon all her treasures; for she has seen the nations enter her sanctuary, whom you have commanded that they not enter into your congregation.” (Lamentations 1:10)	Resh Laqish said: When the foreigners entered the temple, they <u>saw</u> the cherubim <u>entwined</u> with one another.	R. Qatina said: When Israel would make pilgrimage, they would roll aside the curtain for them and <u>show</u> them the cherubim which were <u>entwined</u> with one another, and they would say to them,
They entered the holy of holies and <u>found</u> there the two cherubim, which they seized, placed in a cage, and carried around the streets of Jerusalem, saying: “Did you not declare that this people were not worshippers of idols?”	They carried them out to the marketplace and said, “Do these Israelites, whose blessing is a blessing, and whose curse is a curse, occupy themselves with such things!”	
<u>See</u> what we found and what they worship; behold, all <u>faces</u> are alike!” So it is written: “Because Moab and Se’ir say, ‘Behold, the house of Jacob is like all the nations.’” (Ezekiel 25:8)	Immediately they despised them, as it is said: “All who honored her despised her, because they have <u>seen</u> her <u>nakedness</u> (<i>‘ervatah</i>).” (Lamentations 1:8)	“See how beloved you are before God; like the love of man and woman.”

^a Ed. Buber, 4b. Cf. par. *Pesiqta Derav Kahana* 19 (ed. Mandelbaum, I:301): On this parallel see Buber, *Midrash Eikhah Rabbah*, Introduction, 4.

display executed by the temple priests is poignantly contrasted with a satire of a pagan festival procession of a cult “idol” in *Lamentations Rabbah* and part (4) of *b. Yoma*.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ On rabbinic awareness of pagan cult processions, see Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 162–75. On processional display of cult images in the Greco-Roman world, see Elsner, *Imperial Rome*, 30–44; Clarke, *Art*,

The Palestinian source is all punishment; the Babylonian equal or more parts pleasure.⁷⁰ *Lamentations Rabbah* expresses anxiety about the exposure, to unsympathetic eyes, of the seemingly idolatrous images secreted in the holy of holies.⁷¹ The Babylonian Talmud, on the other hand, expresses anxiety about this spectacle as pornographic, and in so doing it simultaneously “authenticates” the account of the amorous cherubim.⁷² In the Babylonian version, the gentile accusation of sexual immorality, while misplaced, becomes a confirmation of the gift not only of theophany but also of an erotic relationship between Jews and God – a relationship all too susceptible to misunderstanding by those who are outside of its exclusive visual web. Like the heretic who cannot read R. Joshua b. Hananyah’s signs, the invasive gentile eyes are untrained. In *b. Hagigah*, R. Yose warns, “Woe to those creatures who see but know not what they see.”⁷³ If in the passage from *b. Hagigah* 5b, discussed above, the heretic misunderstands not only the significance of God’s now-hidden face but also the very signs R. Joshua uses to communicate with him, then here invading gentiles are portrayed as “mis-seeing” the visible manifestations of God’s embrace with Israel as lasciviousness.

The Palestinian text expresses anxiety about gentile accusations of Jewish idolatry.⁷⁴ This is likely a rabbinic anxiety about the cherubim that is then projected onto gentiles. At the same time, we should also consider two other discourses that can illuminate this anxiety. The first is a venerable Christian tradition in which Jews are cast as idolaters. The second is a

73–94. On the imperialist seizure of cult objects of peoples conquered by Rome, see Alcock, *Graecia Capta*, 175–80. Eusebius’ description of the destruction of pagan temples and the exposure of their images bears curious resemblance to these rabbinic anecdotes. See Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 3.54, 57, which talks in vividly visual language about the shameful exposure and mockery of idolatrous images.

⁷⁰ This is not to negate the existence of eroticized visual encounter between God and Israel in Palestinian sources. Boyarin shows how this forms the crux of *Song of Song Rabbah*’s reading of the Song of Songs, in Boyarin, “This we know.” Why Palestinian Tannaim (in the *Mekhilta*) and Amoraim do not import this imagery to the temple may be explained by the shift from unmediated mythic encounter, as in revelation, to the dangers of idolatry in material, cultic environments such as temples.

⁷¹ Cf. *Leviticus Rabbah* 22:8 (ed. Margalit, 11:517–18) on Jewish interest in idol worship.

⁷² This link between lasciviousness and idolatry is an oft-used trope in the biblical prophets (Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*, 9–36).

⁷³ *B. Hagigah* 12b. Cf. Matthew 12:14.

⁷⁴ I have argued that this rhetorical use of the Jew may also have inspired the iconophilia at play in *Hekhalot Rabbati*, except that in this instance, God expresses veneration and eroticism toward an image of Israel/Jacob, again watched by Jewish synagogue-goers. In the example in *Hekhalot Rabbati*, however, God gazes back at the voyeurs as they witness this intimacy (Neis, “Embracing icons.”)

history of Greco-Roman speculation about the contents of the Jewish inner sanctum.

In the *Adversus Judaeos* literature, the Jewish propensity toward idolatry was a well-worn trope. The second-century Christian Justin Martyr, born in Palestine, wrote a dialogue in which he debates with Trypho, a Jew. He presses Trypho on the point that a willingness to visualize God necessarily entails a vulnerability to accusations of idolatry. Justin argues that Jews take references to God's hands and body parts literally, that they think that God appeared in visible form to the Patriarchs, and that they were given the laws because of their demonstrated tendency toward idolatry.⁷⁵ By the seventh century Jews were explicitly invoked in Christian anti-icon texts as idolatrous figures, while the cherubim were often invoked in iconophilic texts as justification for image making.⁷⁶

Averil Cameron and others have argued that such Christian sources use Jews and their vices (such as idolatry) as figures to construct Christian "orthodoxy" and distinguish it from "heresy"; as such, they are not necessarily useful for learning about actual Jews.⁷⁷ At the same time, it is not out of the realm of possibility that Jews and Palestinian rabbis knew of such charges. I am not thinking in terms of Jewish-Christian "polemics" here, but rather in terms of ideas and concepts circulating in the same "discursive space."⁷⁸ This is to say that the rabbis are using "the nations" as figures with which to construct Jewish identity, in much the same way as Christians used "Jews." In this case, gentiles mock any Jewish claims of singularity in their divinity claiming that they are like all others.

⁷⁵ Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 114: "And again, when he says, 'I shall behold the heavens, the works of your fingers [Psalms 8:3]' unless I understand his method of using words, I shall not understand intelligently, but just as your teachers suppose, fancying that the Father of all, the unbegotten God, has hands and feet, and fingers, and a soul, like a composite being; and they for this reason teach that it was the Father himself who appeared to Abraham and to Jacob" (ed. and trans. Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, 256). On the laws being given to the Jews because of their susceptibility toward idolatry, see Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 19 and *Didaschalia Apostolorum* 26. John Chrysostom refers to Jewish synagogues as "dwelling places of demons and idolatry" (John Chrysostom, *Adversus Judaeos* 1.3). On Ephrem's conflation of biblical idolatry and a Jewish propensity toward idolatry, see Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism*, 54–55, 76–96.

⁷⁶ On the Jewish propensity toward idolatry, see John Chrysostom, *Expositiones in Psalmos* 149.2 (*Patrologia Graeca* 55:494); Theodoret of Cyrus, *Psalmi* 150 (*Patrologia Graeca* 80:1996); Ephrem, *Homily on Our Lord* 6. On Jews, images, and accusations of idolatry, see Leontius of Neapolis, *Apologia Contra Judaeos* (*Patrologia Graeca* 93:1597n–1609a); and seventh-century anti-Jewish writings such as *Dialogue Between a Christian and a Jew* (ed. McGiffert, 73–77); and the eighth-century *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite Against a Jew* (ed. Hayman, vol. 11, 48, 51–52, 54); Stephen of Bostra, *Contra Judaeos* (*Patrologia Graeca* 77, 217–220). See discussion and citations in Kessler, "Shaded"; Nirenberg, "Judaism of art"; Neis, "Embracing icons."

⁷⁷ Cameron, "Byzantines and Jews." ⁷⁸ Schäfer, "Jews and gentiles," 350–51.

As for Greco-Roman discussions about the contents of the Jewish holy of holies, we find various claims. For example, Tacitus, at one point, declares that the Jews dedicated in “a shrine a statue of that creature whose guidance enabled them to put an end to their wandering.”⁷⁹ Josephus defends Jews from accusations of idolatrous and unsavory worship. Even short of direct polemical confrontations between gentiles and Jews, it is not unreasonable to assume that rabbis knew of such rhetoric, curiosity and rumor.

Re'iyat panim and pilgrimage display

Based on the preceding analysis, we can make some general observations about rabbinic visions of God and temple pilgrimage display. The Palestinian Talmud incorporates traditions that take the “face” in “face-bread” and “face table” seriously and that understand these biblically mandated cultic items as having a theophanic function. Thus, the pilgrim went to “see God’s face” by looking at these objects. The Babylonian Talmud also preserves this tradition, while adding miraculous incorruptibility in the case of the face-bread and a more ritualized visual pedagogy (when the priests say, “See”). In both Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic imaginations, visions of God draw not only from biblical traditions but also from contemporaneous ways of viewing the sacred, whether in terms of the visibility of Greco-Roman and Christian pilgrimage or, as we will suggest, in terms of Zoroastrian desires to see the divine. In other words, the ways that the rabbis visualized a God-gazing past were mediated through techniques used by their contemporaries, while being at the same time rooted in biblical and second temple traditions.

⁷⁹ Tacitus, *Historiae* 5.3.4 (in *Tacitus III*, trans. Moore, 179–85). On the other hand, a few lines later Tacitus goes on to say, “Quite different is their faith about things divine. The Egyptians worship many animals and images of monstrous form; the Jews have purely mental conceptions of Deity, as one in essence. They call those profane who make representations of God in human shape out of perishable materials. They believe that Being to be supreme and eternal, neither capable of representation, nor of decay. They therefore do not allow any images to stand in their cities, much less in their temples.” Diodorus and Photius both report that Antiochus found in the temple a statue of a bearded man (supposedly Moses) seated on an ass and holding a book; see Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historia* 34/35.1–5 and Photius, *Bibliotheca* 244 (379a–b). For a discussion of gentile views of the Jewish God, see Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 34–65. Josephus takes great pains to refute Apion’s accusation that Jews had an ass’s head in their sanctuary by declaring that all those who conquered the temple “found nothing there of the kind, but the purest type of religion, the secrets of which we may not reveal to aliens”; and that Antiochus found nothing there “to deserve ridicule” (Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.82–84). Describing the holy of holies, Josephus states: “In this stood nothing whatever: unapproachable, inviolable, invisible to all . . .” (*Bellum Judaicum* 5.219).

If the Palestinian sources seem willing to imagine God's face as somehow manifested visually through the face-bread, they do not, in this instance, go as far as the Babylonian rabbis in terms of more anthropomorphic representations of the divine. In the previous chapter, we noticed a parallel hesitation in Palestinian sources in terms of reciprocal *re'iyah*. To the extent that they acknowledge the existence of the cherubim in the holiest and most hidden spot in the temple, Palestinian sources evince embarrassment about the appearance of idolatry. The Palestinian rabbis seem to have been caught between wanting to see their God and the fear of going too far in imagining such sights.

Babylonian sources show no such hesitation; if anything, these traditions raise the stakes by their sexualization of the ocular and visual transaction between human and divine. When they enter the realm of figuration, as opposed to the more symbolic representation of the face-bread and table, they quite clearly gender the gaze and the visual object in a manner that upsets traditional configurations of power, gender, and the expected balance between humanity and divinity.⁸⁰

Heterovisuality in Palestine and Babylonia

In this chapter and in the previous one, we encountered at least two different rabbinic modes of seeing God. We dubbed the viewing mode in Chapter 2 "homovisuality." The mediated, and role-differentiated seeing in this chapter we term "heterovisuality." The first, found in embryonic form in Palestinian Tannaitic sources, is exemplified in *b. Hagigah* by a notion of an ideal face-to-face, eye-to-eye, male-to-male, reciprocal vision between human and divinity.⁸¹ The second, exemplified in *b. Yoma*, is eroticized and gendered and, in its emphasis on display and pedagogy, sets up a rather one-sided visual economy.

This latter "heterovisual" viewing mode cultivates a way of seeing that produces difference, in these cases between both seeing subject and viewed object.⁸² The difference between seeing subject and viewed object is

⁸⁰ See Osborne, "Looking on."

⁸¹ While something like the mirroring quality of this visual mode is present in earlier Palestinian sources, its full ocular reciprocity is not, nor are the semiotics of nostalgia. Like sees like, even if viewing never quite transforms the divine-human relationship into one between equals (hence the usage of the master/slave metaphor).

⁸² This mode also has some echoes in Palestinian sources where God is feminized, but never in the context of theophany and pilgrimage visibility per se. On divine femininity, see Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life*, 125–28.

produced in part by the very materiality of the representation itself, particularly in the case of the cherubim.⁸³ Unlike the seeing pilgrimage (*re'iyat panim*), in which vision is ostensibly unmediated and direct, it is significant here that the viewer sees objects, or even what are conventionally called "images." This differential aspect of viewing is heightened and thematized by the separating curtain that is rolled aside by the priests (preceded by the imagery of the poles of the ark protruding through the fabric) and by the priests' visual instruction.⁸⁴

While in some cases difference between viewing subject and viewed object can be configured along gendered lines, most commonly with a masculine gaze and a feminine visual object, matters are not quite so clear in this case.⁸⁵ In *b. Yoma*, the precise gendering of the gaze and the visual object is ambiguous. On the one hand, the erotic gaze commonly signifies a masculine viewer in rabbinic, and other late-antique, culture. However, a typical rabbinic gendering of humanity (particularly Israel) vis-à-vis divinity (inspired by the Song of Songs among other sources) effects a feminine Israel and a masculine God, and is seemingly borne out in *b. Yoma* 54a's comparison of God's love for Israel to the carnal love between a male and female. On the other hand, as discussed, the gendering of God vis-à-vis Israelite pilgrims also feminizes the theophanic cultic objects while masculinizing the pilgrims' gazes. In the wider context of the four parts of the *b. Yoma* passage, all viewers are male, as reinforced by the explicit gendered/sexualized viewing in (4), and what they see is arguably feminine. Yet, in the particulars of the divine-Israel coupling, the pilgrims may be called to identify with either a female or a male cherub in embrace with the divine. This last factor also means that there is not an absolute separation between viewer and viewed, for the viewer, whose gaze may be masculine, is

⁸³ Compare these visual modes with Elsner's contrast of "ritual-centered" or "mystic viewing" (i.e. a gaze shared with the deity) and "naturalistic visuality" (in which the viewer's desire alienates and objectifies the visual object) (Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 11, 23–25). Such a dichotomy does not quite work for the heterovisual mode in *b. Yoma* which is simultaneously ritual and erotic.

⁸⁴ We will examine passages in the Bavli that recognize that arousal that can be occasioned by statues and images in Chapter 4. See *B. Sanhedrin* 39b, in which Jezebel fixes icons of prostitutes to Ahab's chariot in order to "heat" her otherwise "frigid" husband.

⁸⁵ As discussed in the previous chapter, I do not use heterovisuality in quite the same way that contemporary theorists use it, to mean either visual regimes that represent normative gender and heterosexuality, as Veri, Wiegman, and Zwinger, "Tonya's bad boot," 109, or as per Kestnbaum, *Culture on Ice*, 291. In my usage of heterovisuality (or homovisuality), the difference (or sameness) need not be about sexuality or erotics, nor need it entail a gendered or sexed binary that complies to expected notions of active/passive or viewer/viewed. As I hope to have shown, *b. Yoma* 54a complicates such binary notions.

invited to identify with at least one of the coupling cherubs.⁸⁶ Thus, even as *b. Yoma* goes much further than the face-bread traditions in *b. Hagigah* 26b (and parallels), and certainly than those in *y. Hagigah*, in its presentation of the object of the pilgrim's vision, its heterovisuality founders. Nonetheless, the gaze is not reciprocal and it trades on a gendered economy of vision, even if it is not entirely stable.⁸⁷ To the extent to which Palestinian sources contemplate such a heterovisual economy, we find a critique, or at least an ambivalence, about the resultant mediated, material representation of the divine (as idolatry). Palestinian sources do not countenance more than the table of the face-bread, as that which the pilgrim saw.

Let us recall that in the Babylonian tractates *Hagigah* and *Yoma*, the climactic moment of vision is thrown into high relief by its removal.⁸⁸ However, the loss of vision is represented in different ways, corresponding to the different viewing modes underlying each discussion. In the economy of the reciprocal, mirroring vision of *Hagigah*'s homovisuality, it is blindness, or the inability to see the divine face, that comes to embody the loss of vision. In the scene of eroticized heterovisuality in *Yoma*, it is the (over)exposure of voyeurism that puts an end to things.

Abandonment is the primary affective hue of the first scenario; its colors are vividly drawn by the narratives and exegesis relating to punishment and exile. In its tow is desire for the restoration of intimacy. Sexualized shame dominates the traumatic termination of the second visual mode. In this mode, God, depicted as a feminine visual object to be enjoyed by the male pilgrims, is violated by gentile eyes that expose the intimacy between Jews and the divine as shameful (or, in Palestinian sources, idolatrous). "All who honored her despise her because they have seen her 'ervah': a badge of love and pride has been turned into a source of shame and mockery by foreign invasion."⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Cf. Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 25: "Ultimately, because there is no contact in the regime of naturalist representation, there is only longing, nostalgia, and frustrated erotic desire."

⁸⁷ See Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 1–28. Elsner dubs a mode of viewing that shares many of the characteristics here as "naturalistic viewing." Heuristically, he distinguishes this mode of "identification, objectification, ultimately erotic desire" (11), in which there is a "hyper-realized celebration of naturalistic visuality," from "sacred viewing," in which subject/object difference is broken down. Elsner notes that, "naturalistic viewing was one of the pitfalls which pilgrims had to circumvent in getting their sacred contemplation right" (Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 25). On this account, sacred and naturalistic viewings are distinct in Roman visuality and pictorial representation, whereas they are intertwined in rabbinic visuality and imagined pictorial representation. The rabbis are content to mix up these differing viewing modalities *within* sacred viewing.

⁸⁸ On the significance of anecdotes in which Tannaim go to *see* the temple implements and in particular the attention to their first-person eyewitnessing thereof, see Boustán, "Spoils."

⁸⁹ Lamentations 1:8.

Conclusion

We have traveled, from the previous chapter to this one, along a particular route by which the rabbis sought to see God. This moved from the elaboration of the biblical injunction to see God's face, to the ideal bodily and ocular requirements for fulfilling *re'iyat panim*, to the notion of mutual vision, and to the various objects of the pilgrims' gaze, all laced with their various halakhic, narrative and affective tones. We have noted how the rabbis drew from biblically inspired tropes and cultic laws to imagine the experience of viewing God in the temple, and also, how they interwove contemporaneous Greco-Roman, Christian, and perhaps (as we will suggest) Zoroastrian, notions of theophany and pilgrimage piety.

It is worth reiterating that at the level of the post-Tannaitic sources, the Bavli consistently (in both this and the previous chapter) goes further than Palestinian writings in visualizing sights of God past. While some of the specificities of these sights may be indebted to Greco-Roman and Christian pilgrimage visualities, how to explain the qualitative differences between Palestinian and Babylonian re-visions of temple pilgrimage? One possibility is that this flowering is part of the same sphere of temple-related liturgy and art that flourished increasingly in Palestine after the close of the Yerushalmi. This may also comport with the explicit longing for the sight of God's face in later Palestinian midrash and piyut that matches the pining for the restoration of cult in the Bavli.⁹⁰

We can also consider Zoroastrian materials. Here we have less in the way of pilgrimage visibility but much in the realm of the desire to gaze upon divinity. Shaul Shaked shows that Zoroastrian sources are filled with an obsession for the perception of the divine through the faculty of sight, by means of the "eye of the soul."⁹¹ Zoroastrians longed to see "the great splendor and mystery" of the divinities and entities of *mênôg*, the invisible world.⁹² The third-century Greek biographer Diogenes Laertius writes that Zoroastrian priests claim "that the gods appear to them (*emphanizesthai*). Moreover, they say that the air is filled with images (*eidōlōn*) that enter the eyes (*opseis*) of the sharp-sighted (*oxyderkōn*) through an emanation caused by evaporation."⁹³ Shaked suggests that the Zoroastrian desire to see and

⁹⁰ E.g. *Pesiqta Rabbati* 1 (ed. Friedmann, 1a), Hirshman, "Yearning."

⁹¹ See Shaked, "Some Islamic reports," 48; Shaked, "Quests"; Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation*, 27–52.

⁹² *Dēnkard* VII.4.84 (trans. Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation*, 50); "see the divine splendour" (ibid.).

⁹³ Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 1.6–9 (modified translation of de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*, 212). As per Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation*, 46–49, and de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*,

the visual emphasis in the *Hekhalot* corpus bespeak a shared Sassanian, pre-Islamic, cultural sphere.⁹⁴ Even outside of the writings of the Zoroastrian priesthood, there is plentiful evidence for the widespread belief that Mesopotamian humans lived in a complex world of invisible or potentially visible demonic and divine beings.⁹⁵ Another lead in situating the Bavli's willingness to imagine God as a material and anthropomorphic image lies in the depictions of gods in Sassanian investiture scenes in the reliefs at Firuzabad and Naqsh-e Rostam.⁹⁶ The inscriptions on some of these label the monarch as he "whose face/appearance (*čīhr*) is from the gods."⁹⁷

Can we understand the Bavli's sense of loss for, and its lack of reticence about, the sight of God as stimulated, in part, by a non-rabbinic, Zoroastrian emphasis on the gods' visibility, at least to the elect few? It is certainly possible that the vividness of Babylonian visions of *re'iyah* was in part enriched by Mesopotamian and Persian notions of divinity, even if its specificities were not. In trying to account for the Babylonian *re'iyah*, we must recognize the multiple ways in which rabbinic God gazing was informed. These included Mesopotamian and Persian concepts, inherited biblical and post-biblical traditions and exegeses thereof, as well as transformations in Greco-Roman and Christian pieties that occurred between the second and fifth centuries throughout the Roman East and beyond.

217–20, this may relate to the more general doctrines of the visible (*gētīg*) and invisible (*mēnōg*) worlds, to Zoroastrian vision quests, to the casual way that seeing the gods is invoked in certain sources, as well as to more esoteric traditions for the "sharpsighted." This tradition's description of the mechanics of visual perception is clearly indebted to atomistic formulations of intramissive visual theory. While de Jong notes the various Zoroastrian sources that confirm Diogenes Laertius' report, he observes that the specifics of this visual theory are not attested and may represent a mix of "correct Iranian traditions" with "Greek theory." Cf. Daryaei, "Sight, semen and the brain."

⁹⁴ Note that the Pahlavi terms *daēnā*, the vision of the soul who meets the deceased, is characterized as a beautiful woman if the person has done good or ugly if not (Gignoux, *Man and Cosmos*), and *dēn*, "religion" or "vision" (from the root *di*- "see"). For a discussion about whether Ohrmazd and the Ameshašpands are to be worshipped in the material world when they are invisible there, see *The Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest nā-šāyest*, 15 (ed. Kotwal, 56–57); on the soul's ability to "see through the spiritual (*menogig*) senses the place where they seem to see Ohrmazd," see *Dādestān ī dēnīg*, 18 (ed. and trans. Jaafari-Dehaghi, 73–75). On Ohrmazd as a light without a body see *Ardā Wirāz* 101 (ed. and trans. Vahman, 184–85; 219).

⁹⁵ See Gafni, "Babylonian rabbinic culture," 244–49; Elman, "He in his cloak"; *b. Berakhot* 6a (method for seeing invisible denizens of world, dangers thereof); *b. Berakhot* 43b; magic bowls frequently enjoin demons *not* to appear (Shaked, "Poetics of spells," 179).

⁹⁶ Daryaei points to the visual resemblance of gods and kings (Daryaei, "Kingship," 66–67). See also Herrmann, "Rock reliefs."

⁹⁷ This includes the inscriptions at Naqsh-e Rostam on Shapur I and Bahram I, which do not depict deities. Soudavar translates *čīhr* as "face/appearance" and the phrase as "in the image of the gods" (Soudavar, *The Aura of Kings*, 41–45). See also Soudavar, "Significance." Daryaei translates *čīhr* as "image/seed." See also Lincoln, "Physiological speculation"; Lincoln, "Center of the world"; Gignoux, *Man and Cosmos*; Lincoln, "Human unity"; Piras, "Asna-xratu"; Shapira, "Zoroastrian sources."

A singular Jewish eye

While Zoroastrians priests were noted for their claims of a piercing eye that could perceive invisible entities and Christians maintained that they apprehended God's visible *eikōn* in the person of Jesus, Manichaeans rejected the visible world and divine visibility as evil illusion. Some Platonists were similarly skeptical about the visible, material universe, whereas others, such as Plotinus and Iamblichus, believed that its contemplation allowed one to access that which was ultimately immaterial and transcendent.⁹⁸ All this is to say that how one saw one's god was an important part of how one became a Christian, a Zoroastrian, Logos, or Helios-worshipper.

In this regard, Jews had a checkered history. As discussed, there was curiosity about what exactly lay in their inaccessible, innermost shrine. Speculations ranged from approving or scornful statements about its emptiness, to descriptions of the ass or mounted figure within. Ethnographic curiosity and imperialist inquisitiveness could have driven the interest in penetrating the secrets of the particulars of this people's cult.⁹⁹ Significantly, Jews claimed for themselves a unique relationship with God; as Philo put it, the Jews were God-seers.¹⁰⁰ Add to all this the tropes of Jewish blindness to God's manifestation on earth and of a Jewish propensity toward idolatry, and it is small wonder that there was a broadly contested discourse about Jewish divine visuality.

The emerging visual encounter with the divine in Tannaitic sources, and its vivid incarnations in Babylonian texts with their affect-laden sense of loss, confirms the heavy stakes in God gazing. Whether in the unmediated, homovisual idiom of *b. Hagigah* 2a and 4b, in the straightforward heterovisuality of *b. Hagigah* 26b and parallels (face-bread), or in the more complex heterovisual approach of *b. Yoma* 54a and *Lamentations Rabbah*, *Petihta* 9 (cherubs), the rabbis, in different ways, make a claim for a Jewish visual encounter with God. That the most concrete address and evidence for this claim – the temple – lay in ruins did not discourage the rabbis, even

⁹⁸ Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom*, 23.

⁹⁹ Tacitus goes both ways, reporting that Jews worshiped an effigy of an ass and that they had no image in their shrine. See *Scholia in Lucanum* 2.593 for the statements about lack of images, attributed to Livy (Stern, ed. and trans., *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. 1, 133); Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana* 37.16.5–17.2 (describes the lack of statue in Jerusalem and the invisible Jewish God); on Moses' realization that God is beyond visual representation, see Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.35. On these sources, see Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 24, 34–64.

¹⁰⁰ There is some debate among scholars about whether Philo intended this to be a universal human capacity or something particular to Jews. See Wolfson, *Philo*, vol. 11, 51–52; Birnbaum, *Place of Judaism*, 223–24; Delling, “One who sees God.” Gregory the Great claims that Israel – the one who sees God – is the gentiles, who see God with the eyes of faith (Gregory the Great, *Expositio in Librum Job*, 1.2.57 [*Corpus Christianorum* 143:95]). This represents a tussle over visual rights to God.

three hundred years or more after the temple's destruction. On the contrary, they actually considered the various implications of the withdrawal of divine sights, whether in terms of accusations of Jewish blindness (*b. Hagigah* 5a–b), or of shame about gentile exposure and penetration of a sexualized pilgrimage spectacle (*b. Yoma* 54a), or of anxiety about idolatry (*Lamentations Rabbah*, *Petihta* (Proem) 9). The anxiety about the last is particularly telling, the fear being that Jewish uniqueness is undermined and that Jews are seen to be the same as everyone else. How Jews saw, depicted, displayed their deity, was a means of constituting not just Jewish identity, but its crucial complement, Jewish difference. Furthermore, these narratives, in depicting the role of the outsider in upholding Jewish self-understanding, serve to figure rabbinic imbrication in larger cultural formations. Jews marked themselves, and others marked them, in terms of how they saw their God.

Divine visibility and its absence

Here, as in the previous chapter (notwithstanding the Babylonian transference of divine visibility onto the sage), we have noted the thematization of loss of temple-based pilgrimage visibility, as well as its affective tones. In general, as has been noted, this led to a peculiar temporality with respect to rabbinic conceptions of God gazing: its projection either backward, onto bygone times, or forward, into a posthumous or messianic afterlife. Even aside from pilgrimage visibility, the rabbis were eager enough to embellish or even to invent visual encounters with God in the Bible.¹⁰¹ The relative reluctance to imagine seeing God in their own day, was, as we have intimated, a hallmark of rabbinic God-seeing.¹⁰² The *Sifra* declares, “For no one shall see me and live’ (Exodus 33:20) – not during one’s lifetime, but at death one may see God.”¹⁰³ The most famous account of post-temple Tannaim engaged in glimpsing the esoteric and divine mysteries is, at

¹⁰¹ They expanded on existing theophanies and took many opportunities to infer from a stray preposition attached to a seeing verb or use of a deixis that a biblical figure saw the divine. See *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma’el, Shirta* 3 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 127): “This is my God, and I will glorify him” (Exodus 15:2) is read to mean that all Israelites saw God at the Red Sea; *Genesis Rabbah* 48:1 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:479): the *shekhinah* stood before Abraham; and Chapter 2, n. 12.

¹⁰² For stories about rabbis being injured (or at risk) in some way from seeing divine, heavenly, or even rabbinic sights, see *b. Megillah* 29a; *b. Hagigah* 15b; *b. Bava Metsi’a* 85b.

¹⁰³ *Sifra Nedavah* 2 (ed. Weiss, 4a). Curiously the restriction of God’s visibility in *Sifra* follows the declaration that God showed his love for Israel by compressing himself in between the two cherubs in order to appear (*lera’ot*) there. *Leviticus Rabbah* 1:14 (ed. Margalit, 1:32) allows that the special few (*yehidim*) see the *shekhinah* in this world, but that in the world to come “all flesh will see together” (Isaiah 40:5). See *Sifre Deuteronomy* 47 (ed. Finkelstein, 105): “R. Shim’on b. Yoḥai said, ‘The righteous will receive the face of the *shekhinah* in the world to come.’” See *b. Sukkah* 45b (also *b. Sanhedrin* 97b): “Abbaye said, ‘There are at least thirty-six righteous people who receive the face

the very least, tinged with ambivalence and caution. We should add the implicit statement here: if only the righteous see God in the afterlife – a theme we also find in post-Tannaitic sources – then we can be sure that the rabbis did not credit claims by other Jews and non-Jews to behold divinity.

Absence, language, and the imaginary

What was the effect of this lack of visual encounter with the deity, whether conceived of in homovisual or heterovisual terms? The larger the geographic and temporal gap between rabbis and temple, the bolder their vision of what once was. This is not a trivial observation; neither does it pretend to be a linear or causal one (witness the softer trend in the Palestinian parallels). It speaks to the rabbinic generation of a desire that was (again, explicitly) premised on the absence of the beloved (in a post-temple, post-facial age). Consider the thoughts of John Chrysostom (347–407 CE) on the role of the Psalms in the absence of a visible God:

This is a particular habit of the lover. Those in love, you know, sing songs to their beloved; even if they are not in sight, they comfort themselves with the song. This is just what the inspired author does. Since it is not possible to see God, he composes songs to him, holding converse with him in song, stirring up desire and gaining the impression of seeing him.¹⁰⁴

For the rabbis, however, the possibility of seeing God did exist, at least in principle, if only in the distant past and in the indefinitely postponed messianic future.¹⁰⁵ God's invisibility was not an inherent quality of divinity, as it may have been for John Chrysostom, but was rather a technical, temporary, and therefore temporal, problem.¹⁰⁶ Regardless of such differences, for both the Christian Chrysostom and the Babylonian rabbis, the trope of divine absence allowed a space of seeing into which language and desire could enter.

The fact that the rabbis limited the visual experience of God in their own time should not blind us to the very real and contemporary work of seeing God that took place via their scholastic practice and composition.

of the *shekhinah* every day (some mss.: generation).” Against this see *Sifra Nedavah* 2 (ed. Weiss, 4a–b); *Sifre Numbers* 103 (ed. Horowitz, 101–2).

¹⁰⁴ See John Chrysostom, *Expositiones in Psalmos*, 9.2 (*John Chrysostom: Commentary on Psalms*, trans. Hill, vol. 11, 182). I cite this source not as a representative of all Christian sensibility or as an argument for influence, but rather as an intertext that can shed light on the project of the rabbis.

¹⁰⁵ This is where it is important to attend to the ways in which the rabbis *do* institute the possibility of seeing the sacred. On the timelessness of the temple in rabbinic writings, see Goldenberg, “Destruction,” 200–02.

¹⁰⁶ On God's invisibility and incomprehensibility for all creatures including the heavenly beings, see John Chrysostom, *On the Incomprehensibility of God* 3.5.

It is uncontroversial to say that the rabbis' primary mode of piety was scholastic, involving the study of Torah, law, and midrash and the expansion of these through exegesis, dialectic, and narrative. The contents and sheer quantity of rabbinic literature make this clear, as does its form.¹⁰⁷ In taking seriously the claims, literary form, and substance of rabbinic writings, not only as evidence of rabbinic scholastic activity but also as the performance thereof, we can say that the rabbinic scholars and editors *saw* God in the enterprise of verbal composition, in the act of compiling these narratives and arranging these exegetical webs.

In this enterprise, the rabbis were not unique. Late-antique rhetoricians, lawyers, writers, and historians sustained ancient traditions about the strong relationship between words and visual experience. From Herodotus to Cicero to Libanius to Egeria, from travel writing to rhetorical exercises to pilgrimage and hagiographic texts, Greco-Roman and Christian writers were emphatic about the ways in which language was bound up with vision in *ekphrasis*, the art of verbal description that brought an experience or object "before the very eyes" of the audience (or *enargeia*).¹⁰⁸ The explicit thematization of absence in the rabbis served (as it did in other texts) to underwrite the dynamics of desire, and *enargeia*. Like the Christian hagiographers that announce that they will paint the portrait of the holy departed in their absence, so too, the rabbinic exegeses and narratives often thematize the loss of God's face in the very accounts that represent it. Through the frame of mourning and loss, the Bavli simultaneously extinguishes that which it invokes, which is exactly the relationship that its exegeses and narratives have to the "experience" that they produce in language.

A further consideration about the rabbinic restriction of this-worldly visions of the deity, allowing such phenomena only textual, historical, or futuristic life in the Bavli: In light of the transfer of God's face to that of the sage, we ought to consider how the temporalities of seeing God's face uphold a rabbinic attempt to control the sacred. By relegating the vision of God to the past and future, the rabbis were able to valorize

¹⁰⁷ On Torah study as a supreme value above other mitzvot in Babylonian rabbinic culture, see Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*, 35. Examples of the many statements about the importance of Torah study in rabbinic sources include *m. Pe'ah* 1:1; *m. Avot* 3:3, 5:20; *b. Menahot* 110a.

¹⁰⁸ The intertwining of language and vision can be thought of in terms of the late-antique rhetorical notion of *enargeia*, bringing something vividly to the mind's eye (through words, often speech), per Quintillian, *Institutio Oratoria* 4.2.63, as well as the practice of *ekphrasis*, similarly defined in ocular terms by Theon, *Progymnasmata* 118.1.7, as that which "brings the subject matter vividly before the eyes" (trans. Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 14). For a recent and thorough analysis of these techniques from the second to fifth centuries, see Webb, *Ekphrasis*. On Christian pilgrimage textuality see Frank, *Memory*, 4.

the face-to-face human–divine encounter in radical ways in relative safety, notwithstanding the threat of accusations of idolatry, while establishing the possibility of seeing God in the next world as a reward for living according to their religious vision. Even beyond the face of the rabbinic teacher, the rabbis did find, or produce, visible holiness in this world, in certain places (synagogues and academies), objects (Torah scrolls, *mezuzot*), and acts (*mitsvot*).

We began in the previous chapter by asking how the rabbis sought to see God or, as the rabbis themselves often put it, to “receive the face of the *shekhinah*.”¹⁰⁹ This chapter has highlighted the degree to which the temple was a locus of divine vision. Rabbinic sources, from Tannaitic to Palestinian and Babylonian Amoraic and later, contain traditions that emphasize God’s visibility during temple times.¹¹⁰ The Palestinian Amoraic materials seem most willing to imagine that God was seen via his cultic implements. The cherubim appear in these sources but are seemingly mistaken for representations of the divine (rather than *manifestations* of the divine as cultic implements). We can understand the Palestinian display traditions, as well as the Babylonian ones, given the spread of Greco-Roman, and subsequently Christian, culture across the eastern Roman empire into the Persian-Mesopotamian realm, in terms of what we know about Greco-Roman and especially post-Constantinian Christian impulses to go to see the sacred.¹¹¹

This does not mean that the rabbis did not wonder about where the *shekhinah* resided after the temple’s destruction and in their own day.¹¹² These speculations, however, do not expressly consider God’s location in

¹⁰⁹ The term *shekhinah* derives from *sh-k-n*, “dwell.” The Targumim (Aramaic translations of the Bible) often use the term to translate the Hebrew “face of God,” while the rabbis often use it to signify the physical presence of God. The rabbis often conceived of the *shekhinah* without specific reference to its visibility. For example, the *shekhinah* is described as residing over two people when they study Torah or as accompanying Jews into exile after the destruction of the temple; see *Lamentations Rabbah* 1:6 (ed. Buber, 35b); *b. Megillah* 29a–b; *b. Bava Batra* 25a; *b. Sanhedrin* 39a. However, Elliot Wolfson shows that the *shekhinah* was a “locus of vision” (Wolfson, *Speculum*, 41–45).

¹¹⁰ For examples of divine sightings by high priests in the holy of holies during second temple times, see *t. Sotah* 13:8; *Leviticus Rabbah* 21:12 (ed. Margalio, 11:493); *y. Yoma* 5:2, 42c; and *b. Berakhot* 6a.

¹¹¹ The point here is that both Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic pilgrimage visibility manifest the differing degrees to which rabbis from these centers spoke the contemporaneous languages of visual piety. While we are largely in the dark about Zoroastrian pilgrimage pieties, we at least know something of the visibility of the pilgrimage pieties of the (Christian) Roman East (and frontier zones in Syria and Mesopotamia) to which Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis were exposed. Relatedly, Roman-Christian appropriation of Jerusalem and the temple ought to be considered, especially in light of the Christian investment of pilgrimage in Palestine. See n. 37 above.

¹¹² For a discussion of the *shekhinah* following Israel into exile based in part on its visibility, per Exodus 24:10, see *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma’el, Pasha* 14 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 51–52).

visible terms, as such.¹¹³ At the same time, the rabbis of the Yerushalmi and the Bavli did explicitly consider the whereabouts of God's face when determining the correct orientation and posture for prayer. One might imagine that the destination and therefore locus for prayer would simply be God, but the rabbis wanted to know where one turns one's face or directs one's heart: to the heavens above (his current location) or to the holy of holies (his former location). In thinking this through, the rabbis claim that God himself "turns his eyes and face" below to place of the holy of holies.¹¹⁴ Relatedly, we have a dispute about where one directs one's eyes and heart, with one compromise suggesting that one turn one's eyes below while directing one's heart upwards.

This is all to say that considerations of bodily and ritual practices of prayer took God's face as formerly enshrined in the temple as its aim and focus, as much as or even more than God's current locus.¹¹⁵ Prayer or address to God becomes a kind of long-distance pilgrimage to the innermost sanctum. Despite God's absence, and despite the temple's absence, later laws regulate even the way bodies relieve themselves by reference to the eye of an absent divinity that might be offended by the sight of various body parts.¹¹⁶ The point here is that locating and visualizing God in the temple had many uses. While, or even because, they were long inaccessible, God's face and eyes still directed and shaped Jewish bodies, prayers, emotions, and expectations, under the helpful guidance of the rabbis.

¹¹³ For the view that the *shekhinah* left the temple and traveled in exile with the Jews, see *Lamentations Rabbah* 1:6 (ed. Buber, 35b) and *b. Megillah* 29b (in Babylonia). For the notion that the *shekhinah* can manifest in many places simultaneously, see *b. Sanhedrin* 29a and *b. Bava Batra* 25a. On the whereabouts and orientation of God's face and eyes, see *y. Berakhot* 4:5, 8b-c; *Song of Songs Rabbah* 4:12; *b. Berakhot* 30a, 31a; *b. Yevamot* 105b.

¹¹⁴ *Y. Berakhot* 4:5, 8b-c; *Song of Songs Rabbah* 4:12; *b. Berakhot* 30a, 31a; *b. Yevamot* 105b.

¹¹⁵ In Babylonian sources, one is supposed to pray "as if he were standing in front of the covering [of the ark in the holy of holies]" or alternatively by "seeing himself as if in front of the *shekhinah*" (*b. Berakhot* 30a). On the ritual re-emplacement of Jerusalem, see Smith, *Map*, xiv, where Smith discusses the shift in late-antique religious diasporic relationships to land and place: "Rather than a god who dwelt in a temple or would regularly manifest himself in a cult house, the diaspora evolved complicated techniques for achieving visions, epiphanies or heavenly journeys. That is to say, they evolved models of access to the deity which transcended any particular place."

¹¹⁶ *Y. Berakhot* 9:5, 14b-c; *b. Berakhot* 61b.

CHAPTER FOUR

Visual eros

Eyes are the most delicate, most powerful hands, imponderably touching the other over-there.¹

Hélène Cixous

Perhaps nowhere are the effects of the eye as vivid as in the realm of the erotic. The slipperiness of vision, its potency, its adjacency to and confusion with touch, its effects on both seer and seen, aroused fear and excitement in ancient people. By the time we can speak of the early rabbis, somewhere in the first or second century CE, a panoply of cultural traditions and practices circulated in the Near East whereby sight, desire, and sexuality were precariously entangled. Across ancient sources, from Mesopotamia to Israel to Greece, we find nearly all looking, whether setting one's eyes upon a person's form or body or the exchange of a glance, could both express and arouse desire, lust, or love.² Such notions and a variety of practices built thereon persisted into late antiquity and well beyond, including in the modern philosophical writings of those such as Cixous and Merleau-Ponty and in everyday notions of "love at first sight." In antiquity Greek-speaking novelists and Latin poets capitalized on them; Jewish and Christian sources attempted to police and regulate them.³

¹ Cixous, "Writing blind," 141.

² E.g. Shamhat's seduction of Enkidu, which is very explicit about how Shamhat's display of her body arouses Enkidu in *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet I, Column 4; on visual eros in the epic, see Walls, *Desire, Discord, and Death*, 17–30. For further discussions of visual arousal, see Winter, "Sex"; Bahrani, *Women of Babylon*. The literature on visual eroticism in ancient Greek culture is enormous (e.g. Frontisi-Ducroux, "Eros, desire and the gaze"; Plato, *Cratylus* 420b for an account of how eros flows through the eyes). While vision and sexuality is a persistent theme in biblical narrative and law (e.g. Genesis 34:2, 2 Samuel 11:2, Ezekiel 23:14–17), the Song of Songs exemplifies its use in poetry (e.g. Songs 2:9, 14; 3:11). On gender and eroticism in the Bible, see Brenner, *Intercourse*.

³ Rosen Zvi, "Bilhah the temptress"; Glancy, "The accused."

Consider this rabbinic example:

A story about Rabban Gamaliel who was standing on the temple steps when he saw (*ra'ah*) a certain idolater [female] who was exceedingly beautiful (*na'ah beyoter*). He said, "Lord, how great are your works."⁴

The rabbinic story puts this Tannaitic law to the test:

One who sees beautiful human beings or beautiful trees says, "Blessed is the one who has created such beautiful creatures."⁵

On the one hand, this law mandates the recognition of human (along with arboreal) beauty by reciting a blessing; on the other hand, what is a venerable rabbi doing gazing at a woman, and a gentile woman at that?⁶ The Palestinian version of this story puts it this way: "was it the habit of Rabban Gamaliel to gaze (*lehistakkel*) at women?"⁷ The story exonerates Rabban Gamaliel, stating that "even if he had seen a beautiful camel, a beautiful horse, or a beautiful donkey," he would have made a blessing, but regardless, the rabbi was caught along "a winding road, like a curved path into a town, and gazed against her against his will."⁸ By the time the narrative reaches Babylonia, the unease, laced with irreverence, becomes full-fledged consternation. The Babylonian rabbis raise the stakes, challenging the rabbi's behavior by citing prohibitions against blessing the beauty of idolaters, as well as laws against gazing at beautiful women (even if unmarried), married women (even if ugly), women's colorful clothing, or mating animals. They eventually rescue the rabbi with the same excuse: poor urban planning. This narrative, and its framing in Palestinian and Babylonian sources, brings to life many of the late-antique rabbinic anxieties about, and preoccupations with, vision and sex.

These worries were not unique to the rabbis – late-antique Christians, for instance, also shared them. The sense that looking, particularly at sexual matters, is somehow more than "just" looking, is still alive today. We see this in a range of phenomena: from moral arguments and scientific studies about the effects of these sights on the viewer, to debates about

⁴ B. 'Avodah Zarah 20a (y. Berakhot 9:1, 13b–c; y. 'Avodah Zarah 1:8, 40a–b).

⁵ T. Berakhot 6:4. See the blessing in b. Berakhot 43b for "one who goes about in Nisan and sees trees (*vehaze ilane*) sprouting"; cf. m. Avot 3:9.

⁶ Both y. Berakhot 9:1, 13b–c and y. 'Avodah Zarah 1:8, 40a–b cite a teaching of R. Yoḥanan in which "do not show mercy (*tehannem*)" Deuteronomy 7:2 is read as "do not grant (*titten*) them grace (*hen*)."⁷ The Bavli also cites a teaching of Rav, "a person is not allowed to say, 'How beautiful is this [female] idolater.'"

⁷ Y. Berakhot 9:1, 13b–c; y. 'Avodah Zarah 1:8, 40a–b. In the Bavli's terms, "but is looking (*le'istakkule*) even permitted?"

⁸ Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Palestinian Aramaic*, 445, s.v. *prosdos*.

pornography, censorship, and childhood, to the strong responses to the visibility of women by ultra-orthodox Jews in contemporary Israel.⁹

Our concern here is to investigate the landscape of the ancient world, rife with objects of and ideas about visual desire. As we have already noted, for the ancients, and for rabbis among them, seeing was intertwined with, and often inseparable from, the sense of touch; as a result, seeing sexually was experienced as an even more physical, embodied, and affective phenomenon than we may think of it today. While Palestinian Amoraic tradition teaches that one ought to enjoy all that one sees, Palestinian rabbis, and their Babylonian brethren, also expressed much ambivalence about what it meant to navigate the dangerous and delightful world of vision and desire.¹⁰ As we will see, the rabbis loved to look, even if only (and somewhat paradoxically) in order to better legislate prohibition.

The story about Rabban Gamaliel captures many of the themes that arise in rabbinic reflections on visual eros, or the desiring gaze. There is the pleasure and delight in vision, with the designation of “beauty” expressing the visual pleasure an object gives to its viewer(s). The story makes a woman beautiful, following a longstanding trope that associates beauty with the feminine and that sees feminine beauty as both asset and liability. We will turn to this notion of beauty as a feminine characteristic in section 3 of this chapter. This story also underscores rabbinic concern about the appropriateness of rabbis looking at women. Packed into this concern are assumptions about the inevitability of certain gendered divisions of visual labor, in terms of who sees and who is seen.

This brings us to the central concern of this chapter: the gendering of vision in the realm of desire. If our guiding question concerns how the rabbis understood and dealt with erotic vision, then our answer quickly

⁹ Contemporary discussions, whether posed in moral or scientific terms, about the effects of viewing pornography (or violence), reveal that we, too, remain concerned about whether certain kinds of seeing are “merely” looking. Research on the brain activity of various kinds of spectators has shown that engaged viewers’ brains light up as if they were actually partaking in the activity being watched, suggesting the existence of “mirror neurons” that break down binary conceptions of subject/object and activity/passivity in the perceptual and visual realm (Dill, *Fantasy*; Barker and Petley (eds.), *Ill Effects*). Examples of religious discussions about censorship and self-preservation include the following: Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy*, aimed at Christian men, “married and single alike,” which uses psychological concepts; www.guardureyes.com, an ultra-orthodox Jewish website aimed at overcoming visual temptation on the Web and in the everyday environment, which has the endorsement of several prominent ultra-orthodox rabbis, blends rabbinic and addiction therapy discourse. For various *haredi* responses to female visibility, see Moshe-David, “Tiberias”; Makover-Balikov, “Women of the veil”; Rotem, “Mother Taliban”; Nagler-Cohen, “Taliban Rabbis”; Novick, “Sight unseen.”

¹⁰ *Y. Qiddushin* 4:12, 66d: “In the future every person will have to give an account for what his eye saw but he did not eat.”

makes apparent the extent to which visual eros was gendered. The most obvious visual paradigm is gendered in binary terms: Vision is a predominantly masculine act with a feminine visual object. This division of visual labor, or separation between viewing subject and visual object, fits within a heterovisual frame. In the most simplified versions of this paradigm, gender is aligned with sex so that the gaze is not only masculine but also male, and the visual object is not only feminized but female, thus overlapping with a heterosexual paradigm of desire. As John Berger put it, "According to usage and conventions which are at last being questioned but have by no means been overcome – men act and women appear. Men look at women."¹¹ However, as we saw in Chapter 3, and as our investigation here will uncover, the rabbis imagined a more complex variety of gender configurations.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Laura Mulvey and others generated the paradigm of the male gaze/female visual object in order to analyze viewing and visual culture.¹² With all its noted insufficiencies, like many paradigms it provides a useful starting point for thinking that may eventually transcend it. Our investigation in these pages will move outward from this binary paradigm of visual eros to explore how visibility served as a site for both the production and the troubling of gender in rabbinic literature. I thus begin in the next section ("Genitalia and the gender of the gaze") by examining an instance of rabbinic erotic visibility that, on the surface, corresponds with this simplest binary formulation. Here, later Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis construct hypothetical cases exploring whether a man can recite the Shema prayer while looking at female body parts, including genitalia. However, the rabbis also consider scenarios in which male genitalia come into view, whether of self or others. Here, a simple gendered binary of male viewer/female visual object begins to break down. The gaze, and the ways it renders the world and its objects visible, becomes a means by which the rabbis understand gender and subjectivity.

The following section, "Visual asceticism," treats some of the varieties of visual prohibition, which border on forms of visual asceticism. I argue

¹¹ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 45, 47.

¹² See Mulvey, "Visual pleasure," and Chapter 3, pp. 94–95. Mulvey analyzed Hollywood cinema which frames its female subjects as objects of a male, scopophilic gaze. Freud used the notion of scopophilia to think about the love of looking as connected to the sex drive and knowledge. Mulvey describes how scopophilia "arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight" (Mulvey, "Visual pleasure," 9–10). For examples of the usage of psychoanalytical notions of the gaze and scopophilia in classical literature, see Fredrick, *Roman Gaze*, 13–16; Sutherland, "How (not) to look at a woman."

that an expansive conception of prohibited visually erotic objects has a paradoxically stimulating effect on visual eros and examine the implications for gender of the rabbinic refusal to look at potential objects of desire. At first sight, just as in the first section, the notion of men not looking might seem to conform to a simple gender binary of visual labor. However, as in the first section, I show how, particularly in the Bavli, extreme visual abstention results in a subversion and even reversal of expected gender roles. The third section, "Beautiful men," considers the vicissitudes of gaze and gender in the context of rabbinic discourse on beautiful men, exploitative imperial gazing, and intra-rabbinic visual eros.

A central argument in this chapter is that the erotic eye was crucial to the rabbis both for the production of and for the troubling of gender. That is to say, while visual eros was bound up with the production and regulation of rabbinic gender, this gender paradigm did not maintain a rigid masculinity, nor was the rabbi necessarily the possessor of an active male gaze, with females as the only visual objects. The work of perfecting gender was unstable in its efficacy and thus was in need of ongoing iteration.

Genitalia and the gender of the gaze

In biblical writings, vision and sex are often bound together in the context of prohibition. Illicit sexual acts are described in visual terms as uncovering, revealing, or looking at genital nakedness (*'ervah*); such acts are always, whether implicitly or explicitly, performed by a male actor. In addition to prohibited sexual acts, the sight of *'ervah* was also forbidden in the realm of the sacred, that is, on the altar or in the tabernacle.¹³ These concerns make their way into Tannaitic sources, though rarely in the language of vision and *'ervah* per se. In the Mishnah and the Tosefta, we find laws restricting the recitation of prayers in situations where genital nakedness might be encountered, as in certain areas in the bathhouse, or while one is naked oneself.¹⁴ While these usually concern male ritual actors, one such hypothetical scenario, in *m. Hallah*, features a woman:¹⁵

¹³ Exodus 20:23, 28:40–43 (priests covering *'ervah*); cf. *t. Yoma* 1:22, Deuteronomy 23:15. For *'ervah* in sexual contexts, see, e.g., Leviticus 18 and Levine, *Leviticus*, 117–19; Ezekiel 16:36–37, 22:10. Preparations for mystical experiences include not looking at women; see Schäfer (ed.), *Synopse*, §314, §560. Cf. *Leviticus Rabbah* 23:13 (ed. Margalit, 11:548).

¹⁴ E.g. *t. Berakhot* 2:14, 20–21; *Sifre Deuteronomy* 258 (ed. Finkelstein, 282). See Satlow, "Constructions of nakedness."

¹⁵ *Hallah* concerns the obligation to put aside a portion of bread dough for priestly donation. A blessing is to be uttered upon so doing. The rabbis derive this obligation from Numbers 15:17–21.

A woman may sit and separate her *hallah* naked (*'arummah*), because she can cover herself (*lekhassot et 'atsmah*), but a man cannot.¹⁶

While the neutral term *'arummah* (naked) is used, rather than the loaded *'ervah* (genitalia), what needs to be covered is clear from the context. The distinction between men and women here implicitly follows differences in genital anatomy.¹⁷ The Mishnah's concern here is exposure, but to no one's eye in particular, and it treats the body of the ritual actor itself (male or female). The transformation of the Mishnah's concerns in the later sources is quite stark.¹⁸ In the Talmuds, what was a question of nakedness becomes a discussion of *'ervah*, and crucially, both Talmuds introduce the language of vision in terms of the male gaze (see Table 3).

The Yerushalmi and Bavli refer to *m. Hallah* 2:3 but while that earlier tradition dealt with the permissibility of a woman or man reciting a blessing while naked – in other words, with a person's status as ritual actor regarding his or her own body – here, the *mishnah* is read for a scenario in which a male ritual actor looks at a female visual object.¹⁹ Specifically *m. Hallah* 2:3 is seen to support a teaching that a woman's rear is not *'ervah*; presumably the Talmuds understand the Mishnah to be saying that blessings may be uttered as long as female genitalia are covered but that it is permissible for the rear to remain exposed.

The Yerushalmi's discussion relates directly to *m. Hallah* 2:3, whereas the Bavli cites our *mishnah* and related set of traditions in the context of *'ervah* and the recitation of the Shema. The Bavli's discussion is part of a larger passage about the permissibility of reciting the Shema while in bed with one's wife among other hypothetical bedmates.²⁰ Both the Palestinian

¹⁶ *M. Hallah* 2:3. On gendered postures and labor in halakhah, see Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 84–86, 193 n. 19.

¹⁷ Cf. *b. Ketubot* 64b which compares the *mored* and the *moredet* in terms in the external (male, and in context more urgent) and internal (female, and in context less urgent) manifestations of their *yetsir*, and *b. Berakhot* 24a “she can cover her face [i.e. genitalia] in the earth, but not the man.” For a feminist critique of visibility based on the apparent invisibility of women's genitals and the visibility of men's genitals, see Irigaray, *Sex*, 26.

¹⁸ See the excellent analysis of *y. Hallah* 2:4, 58c and *b. Berakhot* 24a (and parallels) in Brodsky, *Bride*, 52–70, 86, 125–27.

¹⁹ It is possible that the Yerushalmi restricts the teaching that the rear is not *'ervah* not just to the case of “blessing” but also, implicitly, to the scenario described in the Mishnah.

²⁰ The Bavli seems to be drawing from a similar (but not identical) set of traditions as that found in the Yerushalmi. This set of teachings comes from one context – a discussion of *m. Hallah* 2:3 and the general permissibility of gazing at portions of a woman, i.e. what constitutes forbidden *'ervah* – but is less than seamlessly integrated into another – saying Shema in bed. Thus, the line “his own wife and when reciting the Shema” while paralleling the Yerushalmi's distinction between general gazing and the case of blessing awkwardly interrupts the preceding debate about *tefah* versus finger and the subsequent discussion of thigh, voice, and hair. For the argument that the Yerushalmi draws from Babylonia, see Brodsky, *Bride*.

Table 3

y. *Hallah* 2:3, 58c

This (*m. Hallah* 2:3) means that the rear is in no way ‘*ervah*. That which you say refers to blessing,

but any gazing (*lehabbit*) whatsoever is forbidden.

As it is taught [in a *baraita*]:
He who gazes (*hamistakkel*) at a woman’s heel (*ba’agevah shel israh*), it is as if he gazes at her vagina (*bet harehem*). And he who gazes at a vagina, it is as if he had intercourse with her.

Samuel said: “A woman’s voice is ‘*ervah*. What is the reason? “Indeed, by the voice of her promiscuity (*mikkol zenutah*) the land was defiled (Jeremiah 3:9).”

b. *Berakhot* 24a

Rav Huna said: “The rear is in no way ‘*ervah*.” Say that this supports Rav Huna: “A woman may sit and separate her *hallah* naked, because she can cover her nakedness in the ground, but a man cannot”. Rav Nahman b. Isaac explained it: “For example, if her face [i.e. genitalia] were covered in the earth” . . .

R. Isaac said: “A handbreadth in a woman constitutes ‘*ervah*.” How?

If we were to say when gazing (*le’istakkule*) at it, has not Rav Sheshet said: “Why did scripture enumerate the external jewelry together with the internal?

To tell you that he who gazes (*hamistakkel*) at the little finger of a woman, it is as if he looked at her genitalia (*maqom hatoref*).

Rather, [here] it is regarding his own wife, and when he recites the Shema.

Rav Hisda said: “A woman’s thigh is ‘*ervah*, as it says, ‘Uncover your leg, pass through rivers’ (Isaiah 47:2), and it says, ‘Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your shame shall be seen’ (Isaiah 47:3).”

Samuel said: “A woman’s voice is ‘*ervah*, as it says, ‘For your voice is sweet and your face is lovely’ (Song of Songs 2:14).”

Rav Sheshet said: “A woman’s hair is ‘*ervah*, as it says, ‘Your hair is like a flock of goats’ (Song of Songs 4:1).”

and Babylonian Talmuds consider the question of whether a woman’s rear is ‘*ervah*. The Yerushalmi seems to allow that in specific circumstances the rear is not ‘*ervah* but that in general circumstances “any gazing whatsoever” constitutes (forbidden) ‘*ervah*.²¹ The Bavli (implicitly) sets Rav Huna’s teaching that a woman’s rear is not ‘*ervah* in the specific scenario of a

²¹ Both Talmuds distinguish looking at body parts of a woman in specific contexts (the Yerushalmi: “for a blessing”; the Bavli: “his wife while reciting Shema”) and a more general “gazing” (the Yerushalmi: *lehabbit*; the Bavli: *le’istakkule*). In the latter case, the Yerushalmi forbids any amount; the Bavli seems to distinguish a *tefah* in the case of “his wife while reciting Shema” versus a finger in other circumstances (non-wife, at least according to the midrash cited).

man reciting Shema in bed with his wife against R. Isaac's teaching that a *tefah* constitutes 'ervah – the editor then narrows R. Isaac's teaching to the scenario of "his wife and when he recites the Shema." Outside of this scenario, in other words, when "gazing" (at a non-wife according to the cited midrash), even a finger (less than a *tefah*) is forbidden. The Bavli then proceeds to thigh, voice, and hair. It is only forbidden to look at 'ervah belonging to one's wife while reciting the Shema, but with women who are not one's wife, 'ervah is always forbidden and the definition of 'ervah is more expansive.

Besides quite drastically changing the terms of *m. Hallah* 2:3 by inserting an explicit male gaze at a female visual object, let us note other significant visual features of the Yerushalmi and the Bavli. The Yerushalmi sexualizes the gaze itself in genital terms by staging it as a phallus. This logic supports the possibility that areas other than the vagina can be considered to be 'ervah. The Yerushalmi bolsters the phallic potency of the male gaze by constructing a set of similes that operate by a kind of refracting transfer and increasing intensity of vision:

He who gazes (*hamistakkel*) at a woman's heel (*ba'agevah shel ishav*), it is as if he gazes at her vagina (*bet harehem*).

And he who gazes at a vagina, it is as if he has intercourse with her.

Gazing at the heel (or "rump") is like gazing at the vagina (a parallel in the Bavli explains that this is because it is opposite the vagina), which in turn is like having sex.²² It is precisely the tactility of the gaze that makes this logic legible.²³ Seeing is no cerebral, transcendent act; it is a form of touch.²⁴ In its association of vision and phallus, however, the Yerushalmi goes further than the kind of manual vision envisaged in Cixous' description. This Palestinian tradition crystallizes earlier Jewish traditions, such as those found in Matthew 5:28 and *Leviticus Rabbah* 23:12, which emphasize the sinfulness of the illicit sexual gaze.²⁵ So, too, Tertullian warns that a virgin is "endangered by the public exhibition of herself, while she is penetrated

²² *B. Nedarim* 20a. For the suggestion that 'agevah means rear or "rump," see Brodsky, *Bride*, 69.

²³ On the haptic versus optic gazes see Riegl, *Late Roman Art Industry*.

²⁴ Both Talmuds use language of gazing (*lehabbat*, *lehastakkel*), rather than looking (*lir'ot*).

²⁵ *Leviticus Rabbah* 23:12 (ed. Margalit, 11:545) transmits a similar teaching of Resh Laqish, "You should not say that [only] one who commits adultery with his body is called an adulterer, but rather [even] one who commits adultery with his eyes is called an adulterer." Expanding adultery this way makes it potentially more prevalent (even as it functions preventatively). See also *Mekhilta Derabbi Shim'on bar Yohai* to Exodus 20:13 (ed. Epstein-Melamed, 153); *Sifre Deuteronomy* 115 (ed. Finkelstein, 174; parallel in *b. Berakhot* 12b). On Matthew 5:28 and visual theories, see Duff, "Theories of vision."

by the gaze of untrustworthy and multitudinous eyes.”²⁶ Tertullian and the Yerushalmi both highlight vision’s phallic and extramissive potency.

While the Bavli does not explicitly make the graphic equation of eye and phallus, it does go further than the Yerushalmi in other ways. It sees ‘*ervah* in a handbreadth of exposed flesh, the little finger (or a little finger’s worth), the thigh, the hair, and the voice.²⁷ This synaesthetic collapse between voice, vision, and touch is made by both Talmuds,²⁸ and while both Talmuds emphasize the mutability and tactility of the gaze, and transfer ‘*ervah* beyond genitalia, the Bavli effectively genitalizes a woman’s entire body, when it is under the male gaze.

The logic of substitution in *b. Berakhot* draws on an exegesis of Numbers 31, in which Israelite warriors take the jewelry of Moabite women as spoil. The Bible describes the jewelry using various terms, which Rav Sheshet interprets as adorning both “exterior” areas of the body, such as fingers and necks, as well as “interior” areas, such as breasts and the pubic area.²⁹ In *b. Shabbat* 64a–b, a *baraita* explains that the Israelite warriors sinned (for which they required “atonement,” *kapparah*, in Numbers 31:50) by “feasting their eyes (*zanu ‘enehem*)” upon the Moabite women’s bodies while removing their jewels.³⁰ The Bavli (or Rav Sheshet) reads the biblical

²⁶ Tertullian, *De Verginibus Velandis*, 1.14 (trans. Thelwall in Roberts and Donaldson [eds.], *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. iv, 36). Notice how Tertullian mixes his metaphors such that looking becomes penetration, pointing becomes touching, and gazing in general becomes kissing and embracing. This is, of course, more than the mixing of metaphors, as it is underpinned by late-antique notions of vision as intertwined with touch.

²⁷ While the usage of *etsba* seems to play off its usage as a standard measurement and as an actual body part (especially given its modifier *qatan*, “little”), it is uncertain whether *tefah* plays with this double sense of literal body-part or metaphorical measure, as well (“palm” and “handbreadth”). It is not inconceivable that both usages (*tefah* and *etsba*) convey play between measurements derived from the human body and actual body parts. If that is the case, what a clever way of highlighting the objectification of the body – to play on the way it is used metaphorically for measures of distance and then to close the circle by bringing it back to measure the human body as visual object. Thanks to Adam Parker for this wonderful suggestion.

²⁸ The two Talmudic passages share several traditions, both named Babylonian Amoraic traditions and anonymous ones; however, even setting aside the rhetorical and editorial differences, the two passages arrange these parallel traditions to quite different effect. For example, *b. Berakhot* focuses on the little finger as equivalent to the vagina, which is curious given its phallic connotations. In addition, the euphemism for the vagina in *b. Berakhot* (*bet hatoref*; lit. “the place of filth, decay”) conveys disgust, whereas *y. Hallah* uses the more neutral *bet harehem* (“house” or “seat of the womb”). On fingers and phalluses, see 1 Kings 12:10: “My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins”; *b. Shabbat* 13b: “He did not touch me even with his little finger”; *b. Ketubot* 104a; *b. Niddah* 66a. See also Brodsky, *Bride*, 126–28.

²⁹ Numbers 31:50.

³⁰ *B. Shabbat* 64a–b. The Israelites tell Moses, “Even if we escaped from sinning, we did not escape from thinking (*birbur*).” The Palestinian Targum on the biblical passage makes the opposite argument, i.e. it praises the virtue of the Israelite men who managed to remove all these precious jewels from the bodies of the Moabite women *without* even looking at them. Both the Targum and the Bavli

passage as equating all these body parts under the male gaze such that looking at a finger is tantamount to looking at a vagina. The equivalence between “interior” (vagina) and “exterior” (parts of the body usually exposed) is echoed in Tertullian, who suggests:

Impose a veil externally on her who has a covering internally. Let her whose lower parts are not bare have her upper likewise covered.³¹

Tertullian’s logic is slightly different, of course; it equates the exposure of interior/lower and exterior/upper. Both rabbis and Tertullian share a willingness to associate “external” body parts of women with genitalia. This logic regarding hair is found in the teaching that “the hair of a woman is *ervah*.” The Bavli traces a gaze from a woman’s rear to palm to finger to thigh to voice to hair. If a little finger can be a vagina according to Rav Sheshet, then the Bavli’s gaze roams across a woman’s body, fragmenting it and pausing to focus on particular zones.³²

Laura Mulvey’s insights, though from the very different domain of cinema studies, might illuminate some of these moves. Mulvey noted a series of common cinematographic strategies used to represent women in Hollywood film, including close-ups, makeup, and lighting, and found that they serve to fragment and flatten the female protagonist, particularly her face. Working with the ideas of Freud, Mulvey saw such strategies of objectification and fetishization as a way for (male) filmmakers to disavow their castration anxieties. Without suggesting that the rabbis were indebted to Freud, it is noteworthy that not only does the Bavli perform something of this fragmentation of the female figure, but it also deploys a rhetoric of disgust for female genitalia.³³

While the Yerushalmi and Bavli may share a common core of teachings, they clearly make their cases in different ways. The Yerushalmi’s statement of the phallic gaze is the bolder, whereas the effect of the gaze across the female body is more far-reaching and fragmenting in the Bavli. Rabbis in both Babylonia and Palestine understand visual pleasure as tantamount to,

were clearly stimulated by this passage to think about the problem of the gaze, even if they came to opposite conclusions about its exercise.

³¹ Tertullian, *De virginibus velandis* 1.12 (trans. Thelwall in Roberts and Donaldson [eds.], *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. IV, 35). See D’Angelo, “Veils,” 146.

³² However, Rav Sheshet’s interpretation is specifically about women who are not one’s wife, i.e. the Moabite women. The anonymous editor in *b. Berakhot* 24a then concludes that R. Isaac’s measurement of a handbreadth suffices when it is one’s own wife and when one is praying, restricting Rav Sheshet’s dictum to non-wives and presumably, although not necessarily, non-prayer conditions.

³³ “*Maqom hatoref*.” *B. Berakhot* 10a asks why God chose to place a woman’s breasts close to her heart: “Rav Judah said: ‘So that he should not look upon the place of *ervah*.’ Rav Mattena said: ‘So that he should not suck from a place that is foul (*tinofet*; referring to genitalia).’”

or superior to, actual physical satiation. Indeed, the Bavli, after a series of Amoraic statements about how one actually has to see what one eats in order to be satisfied, records the following teaching of Resh Laqish: "More pleasurable is the sight of a woman than the deed itself."³⁴

Both the Bavli and the Yerushalmi present a male gaze and scrutinize and sexualize the sex and bodies of females. At first blush, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Talmuds force bodies and eyes into a gender binary along clearly circumscribed lines.³⁵ As much as the gaze is gendered in the masculine, the body is made female ("a woman's thigh is *'ervah* . . . a woman's hair is *'ervah*"). All the active verbs apply to the man; women, and their body parts, by contrast, are all grammatical and conceptual objects. Gone is the female ritual actor of the Mishnah: a woman sitting, covering herself, and saying a blessing. Instead, a woman is rendered in terms of body parts that ultimately refer to her sex organ, and a man in terms of his penetrative gaze and his ability to recite Shema.

What allows such gendered and sexed stratification to take hold? The potency of the male, phallic gaze is such that it can genitalize the female body beyond the location of genitalia. The insistence on a clearly sexed, gendered, and seer/seen binary may be, in Mulvey's terms, a disavowal of the fact that these binaries themselves threaten to dissolve in the domain of late antiquity's tactile vision. In other words, on a strongly tactile, extramissive understanding of vision, cast as masculine, the viewer is by his phallic eye implicated by the visual object; this is not the Cartesian transcendent eye which preserves the difference between subject and object: This after all is the basic logic of visual arousal – the phallic eye must be stimulated by its visual object in order to extend toward it (the object of its gaze).³⁶

³⁴ *B. Yoma* 74b, on Ecclesiastes 6:9. The Hebrew conveys the wordplay more clearly, "More pleasurable is the sight of the eyes (*mar'eh 'enayyim*) in a woman than the deed itself (*gufo shel ma'aseh*, lit. 'the body of the deed')." Cf. *Leucippe and Clitophon* 1.9.4–5 for an account of the mechanics of reciprocal gazing as sexual activity. A more cautious and attenuated way of putting this idea, in the context of a discussion about whether the exposure of the adulterous woman's breast (part of her trial by ordeal) will inflame the desire of the priestly onlookers, is the tradition cited by Rava: "The evil inclination only rules over what its eyes see (*'enav ro'ot*)" (*b. Sotah* 8a; paralleled in *b. Sanhedrin* 45a). Visibility, however, could draw both the evil inclination and the evil eye. See *b. Ta'anit* 8b and *b. Bava Metsi'a* 42a for the inverse tradition that "Blessing is only found in that which is hidden from the eye (*hasamuy min ha'ayin*)."

³⁵ In contrast to this visual economy, see that between the first two humans in the Zoroastrian *Bundahishn* 14:28, "Mashî said to Mashyânî: When I look at your belly this thing of mine grows and rises up. Then Mashyânî said: Brother, when I see that member of yours, my belly flutters" (trans. Skjærvø, *Spirit of Zoroastrianism*, 110). MacKenzie gives penis and womb for *kêr* and *askôm*.

³⁶ On the merging of gendered polarities of the gaze in Sappho's poetry as opposed to Anacreon and other male love poets, see Williamson, "Sappho"; Stehle, "Sappho's gaze," esp. 219–21.

Thus far, we find that vision both has a gender and helps to produce gender. The gaze is masculine and phallic; the visual object is not only gendered as feminine, but sexed as female. Arousal and desire are thus problems of gender as much as vision. Such a paradigm serves to construct what we called heterovisuality in the previous chapter; that is, a visual mode that operates along lines of difference, in which the viewer constructs itself by oppositional reference to an other. In this case, heterovisuality serves to reinforce heterosexuality, even if it attempts to circumscribe it through prohibition. If it was masculine to gaze at women, the rabbi became the right kind of man through the inverse of that expectation, as much by *not* looking as by looking. He was to understand himself as a rabbinic man partly through the contrast of liturgical actions (reciting a blessing, saying Shema) with female visual objects.

This all conforms to a naturalized, even if far from normalized, idea about the gendered division of visual labor that maps heterosexuality onto heterovisuality. In other words, in this case the paradigm of viewing that we have described as creating difference between viewer and visual object coincides with sexualized masculine–feminine difference. However, as we will see, the rabbis also consider the problem of men looking at ‘*ervah*’ of men. In *b. Berakhot* these deliberations occur in the context of a broader discussion about circumstances in which it is appropriate to recite the Shema. The Bavli considers the ways in which a man is the object of his own gaze, an instance of what we might call “autovisuality.”³⁷ It uses different visual language when considering male–male vision and male–female vision.³⁸ When talking about a man looking at a woman’s ‘*ervah*’, the terms used are *gazing* or *looking* (*mistakkel*, *mebbit*), as opposed to the *seeing* (*ro’eh*) used with respect to men.³⁹

³⁷ Before it treats female ‘*ervah*’, *b. Berakhot* 24a thinks about various combinations of men, women, boys, and girls, family members and otherwise, in bed with the praying male subject; compare *t. Berakhot* 2:14–15, 20, 21 for similar concerns. But besides the sections examined in this chapter, it does not articulate this specifically in terms of *visuality*. Rather the language is of *co-presence*. The Babylonian Talmud in those cases proposes solutions such as barriers and clothing, but this could again speak to *co-presence* or *proximity*, rather than *visuality* per se. I only treat here those instances where *vision* is explicitly invoked rather than those in which it *could*, arguably, be implied.

³⁸ Both *b.* and *y. Berakhot* use the language of *re’iyah* to think about excrement, but the latter does not consider the problem of male ‘*ervah*’.

³⁹ In *b. Berakhot* 25b, Genesis 9:23 is used to prove that gentile genitalia count as ‘*ervah*’ in the same ways as Jewish ‘*ervah*’. This verse includes the terms ‘*ervah*’ and *ra’u* (they saw). The same terms are used to express the problems of a man’s own genitalia. Besides this, the problem of male genitalia in the context of *shema* is expressed in terms of *co-presence* (*b. Berakhot* 24a) rather than *vision* per se.

The Bavli imagines a curious scenario. Given that a man is forbidden to look at his own *'ervah* while praying, the concern is whether it is permissible for "his heart to see (*ro'eh*) his *'ervah*."⁴⁰ This arises in hypothetical scenarios, like being in bed with the covers pulled up to one's chin or being immersed in muddy water. One's eyes are guarded from the sight of *'ervah*, but the penis is visible to other parts of the body. The rabbis are not only concerned with "his heart seeing his *'ervah*," but also with "his heel seeing his *'ervah*."⁴¹ There are two notable distinctions between the ways that the Bavli imagines looking (rather than gazing) at male and female *'ervah*. One is that *'ervah*, when applied to the male body, is restricted to the genitalia proper. It is not transferred to other areas of the male body. The other is that the male body is "ocularized," that is, the rabbis attribute vision to body parts other than the eyes. To put this somewhat reductively, we might say that the male body can become all eyes and the female body all genitalia.⁴² Or, put differently, the male body becomes an instrument for seeing, whereas the woman's body becomes the quintessential visual object.

If the masculine gaze, or ritual masculinity, is constituted by eyes trained on, or directed away from, female anatomy, it can also involve a self-surveying and eyeless gaze under which the male body becomes visible to itself, albeit without necessarily being sexualized.⁴³ In this sense we might say that the (male, Babylonian) gaze fragments both male and female bodies, though under different visual, anatomical, and sexual regimes.⁴⁴

B. Berakhot 25b goes on to consider the question of whether looking at gentile (male) genitalia while reciting the Shema is forbidden. The Talmud understands this question, posed by Rav Judah, as resting on

⁴⁰ *B. Berakhot* 25b, commenting on *m. Berakhot* 3:5: "One who has gone down to immerse himself [in a *miqve*, and the hour of the morning Shema arrives], if he is able to come out, cover himself and recite before the sun is risen, he should cover himself and recite; if not, he should cover himself with water and recite." One should also consider a specifically Zoroastrian context for the preoccupation with parts of the body seeing one another. Zoroastrians forbade the exposure of genitalia and failure to separate upper and lower body, describing walking around without a belt (*kustig*) and shirt (*sabig*) as going about unclothed (*wisad-dwarisnih*). See *Sayest-ne-Sayest* 4.4–14; Malandra, "Avestan Zanu. Drājah"; Elman, "Middle Persian culture"; Shaked, "No talking."

⁴¹ *B. Berakhot* 25b.

⁴² Note *b. Avodah Zarah* 20b refers to various feminine and sexual sights as strictly forbidden, "even if he is full of eyes (*male*) *'enayyim*."

⁴³ Vision is thematized in this pericope (*b. Berakhot* 25b). The discussion goes on to discuss whether looking at *'ervah* or excrement through a transparent substance is to be avoided while praying. (It is to be avoided in the former case, but not in the latter.) This is in marked contrast to *y. Berakhot* on this Mishnah and the continuation of the parallel pericope in *y. Hallah* 2:4, 58c, which discusses praying near excrement with no reference to the visual question.

⁴⁴ We see this particularly in the Babylonian Talmud, which moves from a gaze that genitalizes the female body to a gaze that fragments the male body when looking at male genitalia (whether one's own or a gentile's).

the possibility that gentile genitalia is not considered human genitalia, based on an interpretation of Ezekiel 23:20: “She lusted after concubinage with them, whose penises (*besaram*) were the penises of asses and whose issue (*zirmatam*) was the issue of horses.”⁴⁵ In other words seeing gentile genitalia becomes a question of species. This possibility is rejected, based on Genesis 9:23, which praises Shem and Japheth for covering up their father Noah’s nakedness after their brother Ham’s incestuous and homoerotic “looking” at his father’s penis. The latter text not only uses visually emphatic language but also, as crucially for the problem at hand, uses the term *’ervah* for Noah’s genitalia. Thus, under the rabbinic gaze, the gentile becomes hypersexualized and eroticized – transgressively, grotesquely, possibly even animalistically – which helps to construct a rabbinic sexuality that is, by contrast, restrained and modest.

A rather different sensibility colors the Bavli’s consideration of an intra-Jewish gaze. The Bavli’s use of the more neutral language of seeing (*ro’eh*) versus gazing (*mistakkel*, *mebbit*) does not contemplate the (homo)erotic possibilities of the male–male gaze in this context. But this kind of gazing is not entirely absent, as we will see in the next chapter when we examine a more explicitly homoerotic rabbinic gaze amidst a discussion of rabbinic genitalia.

While there is no Palestinian parallel to these precise scenarios in the Bavli, the Yerushalmi does consider the autovisual in other contexts that juxtapose the sight of genitalia with ritual and, in our first example, with eroticism. Tannaitic and Amoraic sources talk of King David who goes to the bathhouse and, “seeing (*ra’ah*) himself naked,” laments that he is “bare of commandments (*’arom min hamitsvot*).” However, when he “gazed (*hibbit*) at the mark of his circumcision,” he rejoiced.⁴⁶ In *Sifre Deuteronomy*’s version of this tradition, a remarkably visually eroticized and gendered parable follows this:

A king of flesh and blood [stands in for God] who said to his wife [stands in for David, who stands in for all Jewish males], “Adorn yourself with all your jewelry so that you are desirable to me.” Thus also the Holy One said to Israel, “My children, be marked by my commandments so you are desirable to me.” Thus it says, “You are beautiful, my darling, as Tirzah” (Song of Songs 6:4) – you are beautiful when you are desirable (*retsuyah*) to me.

⁴⁵ The phrase is part of an extended parable, which describes two sisters, representing Samaria and Jerusalem, engaged in promiscuous sex with various gentile nations.

⁴⁶ *Sifre Deuteronomy* 36 (ed. Finkelstein, 68); paralleled in *t. Berakhot* 6:25; *y. Berakhot* 9:5, 14d; *b. Menahot* 43b. Cf. *y. Sanhedrin* 2:3, 20b which uses *mebittin* for looking at women and *ra’u* for the exposure of male genitalia. The former clearly relates to female modesty and visual eros, whereas the latter relates to male modesty but does not seem to have erotic connotations.

The visibility of David's circumcision and, by extension, that of all Jewish males, is eroticized when seen through God's eyes, and gendered in feminine terms (wife, jewelry, beauty, etc.).⁴⁷ In David's eyes, his circumcised genitalia inspire a Psalm of praise. Unlike *b. Berakhot* male genitalia is not opposed to ritual or sanctity; on the contrary, it becomes a marker thereof. Just when David thinks he is stripped of all contact with ritual, he looks down and is reminded of circumcision. This brings us to another distinction between this source and that of the Bavli – the same body part referred to as *'ervah* by the Bavli is dubbed *milah* in the Palestinian sources, pointing to two views (literally and conceptually) of the same organ.

As significant here, is the way that David's gaze channels the gaze of God. In looking at his genitalia, David imagines God looking at it (or at the genitalia/jewelry of his wife/Israel). Not only is the circumcised organ feminized, but David's gaze upon it becomes a place-holder for the divine masculine gaze. Through David's eyes divine-human vision is a heterovisual (and heteroerotic) affair. The penis becomes a visual object that does not look back (in other words, there is no homovisuality) and is explicitly feminized in the parable; and it seems significant in this context that the gaze is heteroerotic (with the transformation of the gender of David's genitalia) rather than homoerotic.⁴⁸

Contrast this positive autovisuality and its heterovisual overtones with another Palestinian anecdote in which Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, dubbed "our holy rabbi" for never having gazed (*hibbit*) at his own penis, refuses to look at the emperor Antoninus' circumcision, declaring, "I have never in my life gazed at my own [circumcision] (*bedidi la istakkelit*), so [would I gaze] at yours?"⁴⁹ Rabbi is characterized as an ascetic, and the language of holiness is used here to describe ocular asceticism in particular; but the story of his perhaps superhuman visual abstinence expresses an ideal that was surely underpinned by a certain degree of anxiety about male-on-male,

⁴⁷ On these themes, see Wolfson, "Circumcision."

⁴⁸ The gendered visual dynamics are far from straightforward here: David sees his own penis as feminine through the eyes of a masculine God. Autovisuality here may not result in homoeroticism, as some claim is the anxiety underlying the tale of Narcissus (Bruhm, *Reflecting Narcissus*). See Stein, "Maid-servant," 383–85.

⁴⁹ *Y. Megillah* 1:10, 72b (paralleled in *y. Megillah* 3:1, 74a; *y. Sanhedrin* 10:3, 29c). Cf. *b. 'Avodah Zarah* 10b. See Cohen, "Conversion," who notes the absence of this story in the Bavli. On the relationship between *y. Megillah* 1:10, 72b and *b. 'Avodah Zarah* 10b, see Gray, "Power." While the anecdote is absent, the related tradition, which also circulates separately in the Yerushalmi (in addition to parallels above, it is found in *y. 'Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42c), concerning the relationship of Rabbi's title "our holy rabbi" and his abstention from looking at his own penis does surface in the Bavli (*b. Shabbat* 118b). *B. Shabbat* 118b is more explicit about the link between gazing at the penis and touching it, adding that Rabbi's hand also never slipped into his undergarment.

eye-on-*'ervah* looking.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the story provides the link between looking at oneself and looking at another.

We might say that Rabbi and David provide two Palestinian models for seeing *milah* and holiness, the first in contrastive terms and the second in complementary terms. A Palestinian example of the former sensibility promises that “whoever sees (*ro'eh*) an *'ervah* and does not feast his eyes (*zan 'enav*) upon it, he merits to receive the face of the *shekhinah*.”⁵¹ Giving up feasting upon forbidden visual objects in this world guarantees the far more delicious sight of God in the world to come. Even as the contrastive sensibility is clearly related, it is noteworthy that the context is about adultery and that *'ervah*, therefore, likely relates to women.

Concerns about a homoerotic and autoerotic gaze also motivated Christian monastic rules, for men and women, which are reminiscent of the exchange between Rabbi and Antoninus in the Palestinian Talmud and of Babylonian rabbinic modesty regulations. Pachomius, a fourth-century Egyptian abbot, instructs monks to take care not to exhibit their flesh, and Shenoute, a fifth-century Egyptian abbot, warns monks to guard their gazes from each other and from themselves:

He shall sit with all modesty and meekness, tucking under his buttocks the lower edge of the goatskin which hangs over his shoulder by his side, and carefully girding up his garment . . . in such a way that it covers his knees.⁵²

Cursed are men and women who will peer or look with lust upon the nakedness of their neighbors in their bedrooms, or stare at them in any other place, either when they are on a wall or up a tree, or when they urinate or walk in mud or bathe, or while they are sitting down and uncover themselves (inadvertently), or when they are dragging up a log to a high spot, or when they are working with one another or washing their clothing . . . or when the brothers who make the bread reach into the ovens or [are busy] at any other task which some would be doing in our domain and in your domain too and unwittingly bare (themselves). And those who will gaze at

⁵⁰ In y. *Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42c, Rabbi's title, “our holy rabbi,” is juxtaposed with R. Naḥum bar Simai's title, “holy of holies,” with the explanation that the latter never looked at the image on a coin his entire life. Note the language of holiness and the similar formulae about never looking at particular visual objects. On these sources and the language of holiness for abstinence, see Visotzky, “Three Syriac cruxes.”

⁵¹ *Leviticus Rabbah* 23:13 (ed. Margalio, 11:548). This is based exegetically on the proximity of “Shut your eyes from looking at evil” (Isaiah 33:15) and “Your eyes shall see the king in his beauty” (Isaiah 33:17). The larger context is about adultery, so *'ervah* in this case may refer to women but the general contrastive message of restraint and holiness still applies.

⁵² Pachomius, *Praecepta* 2 (Boon, *Pachomiana Latina*, 13; *Pachomian Koinonia*, trans. Veilleux, vol. 11, 145, cited in Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies*, 71). Cf. 1QS 6.13–14, on the penalty for making one's penis (*yad*) and *'ervah* “visible” and *Praecepta*, 7.

them in lust with a shameless eye shall be cursed. And also those who look passionately upon their own nakedness shall be cursed.⁵³

This juxtaposition of concerns about exposure, the gaze, and the everyday occurs in the Bavli, as well. In *b. Makkot* 24a and *b. Eruvin* 57b, the Talmud moves from restrictions on “looking” at women doing laundry to rules about the lengths of the rabbinic scholar’s tunics to ensure that his calves will not be “visible.” These sources invite further consideration about monastic and rabbinic communities.⁵⁴ While rabbis married women, they thought the sacred into existence partly by excluding the female sex from their field of vision. The ideal rabbinic visual field was one populated by rabbis; rabbis were, in Daniel Boyarin’s terms, married monks.⁵⁵ Thus the curious gendering envisaged in the passages just mentioned, which juxtapose the restriction of the (rabbinic) male gaze with the restriction of rabbinic male visibility. Notice, also, that unlike with women at their work, doing laundry, the visibility of rabbinic calves is left uncontextualized and absent a particular viewer.

In the Bavli, the rabbis work out their own status via the gaze, by (not) looking at women or female *‘ervah* (as in the Yerushalmi), but also by (not) looking at men or male *‘ervah*, both Jewish and gentile.⁵⁶ In the Palestinian sources, we have some of this as it concerns female *‘ervah* but a different way of conceiving of the problem of male genitalia which concerns *milah* as it impinges upon the sacred (*kedushah*). The gaze then becomes no less than a way for the rabbis to come to terms with their masculinity and, in turn, to shape their Jewishness.

Visual asceticism

While the Babylonian Talmud is arguably not as graphic or explicit as the Palestinian Talmud in equating looking at *‘ervah* with sex, it does go much further in lighting up the female body and its parts, under the potentially licentious male gaze. The visual eroticization (and genitalization) of the female body stimulates and provokes pleasure even as it is immediately subsumed under the banner of prohibition and sin. The passages we have

⁵³ Shenoute, *Canon* 3, Codex YA 257–58 (cited according to the standard White Monastery library codex sigla, text and trans. Young, “Five leaves,” 272–73, cited in Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies*, 71–72).

⁵⁴ See Bar Asher Siegal, “Literary analogies.”

⁵⁵ Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 166.

⁵⁶ The *y. Megillah* 1:10, 72b story probes a borderline case of gentile/Jewish *‘ervah/milah*.

examined in the first part of this chapter come dangerously close to stimulating or enacting the very things under prohibition. This productive power of prohibition is particularly well developed in Babylonian sources.

Spousal nudity in the context of reciting the Shema is just one liminal expression of a more general problem of looking at women (or female *'ervah*). The close connection between gazing and touching means that looking at someone else's wife lustfully is a kind of adultery, a proprietary trespass.⁵⁷ Hence, the expression "set his eyes upon" can be used in contexts in which the gaze is illicitly coveting, as in adultery.⁵⁸ In the passages on *'ervah* and prayer, in both the Yerushalmi and Bavli, there is an apparent distinction between legitimate gazing at one's own wife (except when one is reciting Shema) and gazing at other women's *'ervah*, even though there is ambiguity as to where the boundaries lie.⁵⁹ According to the tradition laid out in *b. Berakhot* 24a, even a little finger's worth of lascivious looking is forbidden, if a woman is not one's own wife. This is echoed in *b. Berakhot* 61a, which warns that lingering while counting out coins into a woman's hand in order to gaze (*lehistakkel*) at her will result in punishment, regardless of one's learning and merit. The same passage enjoins a man to refrain from walking behind women on a narrow bridge, even his own wife, and advises that it would be preferable to walk behind a lion than a woman (though better to walk behind a woman than an idol). Here again, the boundaries between the clearly forbidden and the ostensibly permitted are elided.

Unlike the Palestinian sources, the Bavli's tendency is to make prohibition ubiquitous when women enter the visual field. The Babylonian version of the story of Rabban Gamaliel and the beautiful Roman woman, discussed in the introduction to this chapter, interrogates his looking at her on account of a set of (ostensibly Tannaitic) traditions:

"You shall keep yourself from every evil thing" (Deuteronomy 23:9) – one should *not look* (*lo yistakkel*) at a beautiful woman, even if she is unmarried, or at a married woman, even if she is ugly, or at a woman's colored clothes,

⁵⁷ Matthew 5:28; *Leviticus Rabbah* 23:13 (ed. Margalio, 11:548); *Mekhilta Derabbi Shim'on bar Yohai* to Exodus 20:13 (ed. Epstein-Melamed, 153).

⁵⁸ E.g. *t. Sotah* 4:16; *b. Sotah* 9a–b (note the wide range of those "who set their eyes on what was not theirs"); *b. Sanhedrin* 5b; *b. Sanhedrin* 75a; *b. Bava Batra* 3b; *b. Gittin* 58a. Although cf. *t. Sotah* 13:3–4. In other cases the expression *natan 'enav* is used to designate the dangerous gaze of the sages, e.g. *b. Berakhot* 58a; *b. Shabbat* 33b; *b. Bava Batra* 75a; or the direction of the eyes in prayer: *b. Yevamot* 105b.

⁵⁹ On some interpretations it seems as though the Babylonian editors distinguish between gazing at a handbreadth of one's wife's body during prayer versus gazing at (any other) woman's little finger (outside of prayer).

or at a male or female ass, or at a pig or a sow, or at birds when they are mating.⁶⁰

The net of prohibition is spread very wide here, going well beyond the adulterous and even the human.⁶¹

The rabbis' prohibitory gaze blurred the boundaries between the domestic and public spheres.⁶² An example of this slippage can be found in *b. Nedarim* 20a–b, where the rabbis draw on popular and medical theories of conception in order to support a visual eugenics:

- (1) It was taught . . . And do not converse much with women, as this will ultimately lead you to adultery.
- (2) R. Aḥa b. R. Josiah said: "One who gazes (*tsōfe*) at a woman eventually comes to sin; and one who looks (*mistakkel*) at a woman's heel will father disabled children."⁶³
 Rav Joseph said: "[This applies even to] one's own wife, when she is menstruating."⁶⁴
 R. Shim'on b. Laqish said: "'Heel,' in the Tannaitic teaching, means the place of filth [i.e. genitalia], which is directly opposite the heel." . . .
- (3) R. Yoḥanan b. Dahabay said: "The ministering angels told me four things:
 Why are people born lame? Because they overturn their table."⁶⁵

⁶⁰ *B. 'Avodah Zarah* 20a–b (cf. *b. Shabbat* 64b on colored garments for menstruants). *M. Zavim* 2:2 (partial parallel in *m. Nazir* 9:4) considers the purity status of a man who has had a genital flux, caused by something he has seen, ingested, or fantasized about. All these sights (women's colored clothes, animals mating) are actually a cause for leniency, i.e. to disqualify someone from being considered a *zav*. In *b. 'Avodah Zarah* 20b, however, it is taken for granted that the Tannaitic teachings actually forbid these sights. On *phantasia* (mental images) and seminal emissions in monastic culture, see Brakke, "Problematicization." On the feminization of "colored clothes," see *Sifre Deuteronomy* 226 (ed. Finkelstein, 258), which reads the prohibition against cross-dressing in Deuteronomy 22:5 as mandating a gendered color-code: "A woman shall not wear white clothes (*kele levanim*) and a man shall not cover himself with colored clothes (*tsiv'onim*)." On avoiding women and women's colored garments among other sights (e.g. women) as part of the preparation for mystical ascent in *Hekhalot* texts, see Schäfer (ed.), *Synopse*, §314, §489, §560. See also (not to look at men, women, children or any creatures) in Schäfer (ed.), *Geniza-Fragmente*, fr. 19, lines 11–14.

⁶¹ Adultery in biblical and rabbinic law only applies in a case where the woman is married. A married man who has sex with or gazes covetously at an unmarried woman is not technically an adulterer.

⁶² Compare *b. Ketubot* 17a: "R. Samuel b. Naḥmani said, R. Jonathan said: 'It is permitted to gaze (*lehistakkel*) at the face of the bride all seven [days, i.e. following her wedding] in order to make her beloved to her husband; but the law does not follow him.'"

⁶³ See Tigay, "He begot a son." Cf. (1) and *m. Avot* 1:6."

⁶⁴ Hindu and Zoroastrian religious law emphasizes the gaze of the menstruating woman as contaminating and proscribing its objects, rather than the sight of the menstruating women, or of her sex, as forbidden or dangerous. See *Manusmṛiti* 3:239; 4:41, 44, 53, 208; *Venidad*, 18:46; *Vaikhanaśa-Grhyasūtra* 3:9. See also the possibly sixth- or seventh-century *Baraita Deniddah* 1:1. Babylonian rabbinic sources emphasize the male gaze, except for *b. Bava Metsi'a* 84a, which allows for a female gaze. The latter three sources highlight the reproductive post-menstrual gaze.

⁶⁵ Cf. *b. Ketubot* 37a.

Why are people born dumb? Because they kiss 'that place.'
 Why are people born deaf? Because they converse during intercourse.
Why are people born blind? Because they look at 'that place.'"⁶⁶

- (4) And [the Talmud] notes a contradiction:

They asked Imma Shalom [mss.: the wife of R. Eli'ezer]:
 "Why are your children exceptionally beautiful?"

She replied: "He 'converses' [Rashi: has intercourse] with me neither at the beginning nor at the end of the night, but at midnight; and when he 'converses,' he uncovers a handbreadth and covers a handbreadth, and he resembles one driven by a demon. And when I asked him why, he answered, 'So that I may not set my eyes (*etten et 'enay*) on another woman and my children come to be like bastards.'"

There is no difficulty: this [Imma Shalom] refers to [conversing about] conjugal matters; the other [R. Yoḥanan d. Dahabay] refers to [conversing about] other matters . . .

- (5) "So that you do not follow your heart [and your eyes, after which you used to go astray]" (Numbers 15:39) – from this [verse], Rabbi [mss.: R. Natan] taught: "One may not drink out of one cup and set his eyes on (*yitten 'enav*) another."

Ravina said: "This [prohibition] is necessary only when both are his wives."

In this pericope, the Babylonian editor stitches together a host of prohibitions, connected by the tendency to circumscribe male gazing at women (in terms of concerns about adultery) and genitalia (one's own wife, in certain ritual circumstances). These concerns are married to visual eugenics – visual techniques designed to affect the fetus – weaving together a net of traditions, Tannaitic and Amoraic, Palestinian and Babylonian.⁶⁷ The effect is yet another way of legislating the male gaze, even within the realm of ostensibly permitted sexual relations.

Concerns about gazing in the domestic sphere and in the extra-marital (adulterous) sphere shift and intersect in this passage. The passage begins in (1) above with the suggestion, in an unattributed *baraita*, that habitual conversation with a woman will eventually result in adultery. In (2), we move from conversation to gaze, with R. Aḥa's warning that gazing at a woman will lead to sin and that gazing at a woman's heel will result in disabled offspring.⁶⁸ Rav Joseph, a Babylonian Amora, then extends this prohibition to one's own wife, while she is menstruating. During a woman's menstrual flow intercourse was forbidden between spouses, and

⁶⁶ See Bullough, "Attitudes."

⁶⁷ See Boustán, "Rabbi Ishmael's miraculous conception," and below pp. 134, 154–55, 161, 163.

⁶⁸ Cf. *b. Sanhedrin* 92a, "R. Ele'azar says, 'Whoever looks (*mistakkel*) at 'ervah, his bow quivers,'" based on Habakkuk 3:9, which Rashi understands to refer to infertility. For (1) cf. *m. Avot* 1.5.

here again we are reminded that looking is indeed a form of touch and that it can have deleterious effects. Menstruation is a dangerous time, and the “heel,” which the Babylonian Talmud (through the statement of Resh Laqish) translates as female genitalia, is a dangerous object for the male gaze.⁶⁹ This introduces and comports with what follows in (3), R. Yoḥanan b. Dahabay’s “angelic” reports – that men who look at “that place” (*oto maqom*, a euphemism for female genitalia) will have blind children.⁷⁰ This is a measure-for-measure punishment in more ways than one: first, because looking at women’s genitalia is a visual crime, so the eyes that transgressed are punished by transference in the offspring. Secondly, if a man’s eyes are conceived of as phallic, then gazing at female genitalia results in the transferred castration of his progeny by the blinding of their eyes/phallus, an ancient castration-anxiety fantasy of sorts.⁷¹

The Babylonian editor challenges R. Yoḥanan b. Dahabay’s stringent sexual restrictions with the anecdote that follows in (4).⁷² But it does so only partially. Imma Shalom’s explanation for her physically unblemished and “beautiful” progeny contradicts only R. Yoḥanan b. Dahabay’s warning that talking during sex results in muteness.⁷³ However, the explanation not only upholds but also expands the warning about gazing at one’s wife during sex. Imma Shalom’s spouse uncovers only minimal areas of his wife’s body, has sex in the dark and in great haste, resulting in unblemished and gorgeous children, the positive converse of R. Yoḥanan b. Dahabay’s warning that gazing will result in blind offspring. Not only are R. Eli’ezer’s children not blind; they are “exceptionally beautiful” to viewers. R. Eli’ezer’s explanation for his behavior is truly striking; he claims that he minimizes his sight of his *own* wife because otherwise he might “set eyes on another woman” and so taint his offspring with illegitimacy.

This thinking, together with the ideas that looking at various visual objects will cause physical damage to offspring, draws from ideas about

⁶⁹ Here the logic of substitution operates at the semantic as well as visual level, i.e. it is not that looking at the heel is tantamount to look at the vagina, but rather “heel” is a term for vagina (because it “sees” the vagina).

⁷⁰ The logic of equivalence that we saw in *y. Hallelah* 2:4, 58c (looking at the heel is like looking at the vagina, which is like intercourse) is here one of identity (“heel,” in fact, is “vagina”).

⁷¹ The relationship between male gazing at the vulva and fetal blindness echoes Greco-Roman mythology in which errant male eyes are punished with blindness upon seeing female (especially divine) nudity. The association of blindness with castration is obvious when we think of the phallic qualities attributed to male gazing, and all the more so when we note that Sassanian physiology understood semen as fiery and composed of the same substance in the brain that explained vision. See Daryaei, “Sight, semen and the brain,” and Soudavar, “Significance.”

⁷² This is noted in Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 120–22.

⁷³ The Babylonian editor resolves the contradiction by declaring that conversation during sex that is about sex itself is legitimate.

visual eugenics prevalent in ancient and late-antique Near Eastern sources. These range from the Bible, to Mesopotamian omens, and from Greco-Roman medical tracts to the writings of the church fathers and Palestinian rabbis and extend into Indian texts. Quite simply, the logic dictates that what people see before, during, and even after conception shapes the visible appearance of the fetus and eventual offspring. This notion itself, which we will discuss in more detail below, builds on the mutability, slipperiness, and tactility of sight, and particularly of erotic vision. Whether one operates from the assumption that the female's gaze is receptive of visual objects (intromission) or that either parent transmits what she or he has seen onto the form of the fetus (extramission), it was vision's concrete, physical, haptic impact on the body that fueled ancient concerns about what was seen sexually and what was seen before, during, and after sex itself.⁷⁴

While most of the ancient sources that we know focus on the role of the female gaze in visual reproductive technology, whether prospectively (as in the case of the "ugly Cyprian" who encourages his wife to look at beautiful statues, in Soranus' *Gynecology*), or retroactively (as in the case of ostensible adultery in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*), Pliny declares that it was a commonplace that both parents' perceptions (sight, hearing, memory, images, and even thoughts) influence the appearance of the fetus.⁷⁵ The Bavli here works within this commonplace. What is striking about Rabbi Eli'ezer's statement to Imma Shalom is that the sight of his own wife may cause him to "set his eyes" on another woman. Rabbi Eli'ezer is so hypervisual, or women are so hypervisible, that the sight of one woman stimulates the sight of another, and he must effectively blind himself or make all women invisible, including his wife during sex, in order not to fantasize.⁷⁶ Heightened susceptibility to visual eroticism is the underside of his extreme visual abstinence. But the rewards (beautiful, legitimate children) are visible proof of his success in conquering his impulses.

⁷⁴ Galen (second century CE) was one of the few to make explicit the visual theory underpinning visual reproductive technology in *De Theriaca ad Pisonem* 9. On Persian absorption of Galenic thought, see Russell, "Greek medicine."

⁷⁵ In most accounts philosophical, medical, and narrative, women are especially vulnerable and impressionable (hence the oft-named theory of "maternal impression"). See Soranus, *Gynaeciorum* 1.47; Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 4.8. From Aristotle onward, most agreed that both men and women influence the fetus with respect to matters like sex – we are here dealing with the child's appearance. Pliny, however, took both parents' input into consideration including in the case of vision: "Resemblances offer considerable food for thought. They are believed to be influenced by many chance occurrences, including sight, hearing, memory, and images absorbed at the very moment of conception. Even a chance thought which briefly crosses the mind of one or other parent may form or confuse the resemblance"; Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 7.52 (*The Elder Pliny*, trans. Beagon, 70).

⁷⁶ See Baker, *Rebuilding*, 66–68.

In a further example of the Babylonian Talmud's tendency to pursue prohibition, the editor reinforces R. Eli'ezer's worries about fantasized visual adultery by supplementing part (5), a Palestinian Tannaitic tradition that prohibits "drinking out of one cup and setting eyes on another."⁷⁷ On its own, the Tannaitic teaching simply bans mental visual adultery, but Ravina's statement expands it to prohibit even sleeping with one wife while visualizing a second wife.

This pericope, as an organized piece, makes a marvelous case for vision's potency, its productive and reproductive possibilities, which then must be controlled and legislated by anxious, hyper-vigilant, and hypersexual rabbinic eyes. The specter of illicit sight is ubiquitous both inside and outside the domestic sphere, blurring the boundaries within which adultery can take place, particularly given that adulterous vision itself blurs these very boundaries. Vision's power plays out most concretely when sex meets reproduction, when vision and sex result in a direct, physical outcome.

Once all looking is potentially fraught, a hyper-vigilant gaze is produced, one that continually polices itself, even while inciting itself. Having conceived of visual eroticism as ubiquitous, how did the rabbis, particularly the expansively prohibitive Babylonian rabbis, navigate such a dangerous world?

Covering up

Even if Palestinian sources do not cast the same web of visual prohibition in terms of men looking at women, they still consider the sight of women to be a potential problem. One can imagine several ways of approaching the problem of living in a world pulsing with potential visual eros (in the form of women). The first involves concealing visual objects that pose a threat to the viewer. The second is for viewing subjects to cease looking. In Chapter 5 we will explore this last strategy at greater length as it pertains to idols. A related option is for the viewer to secrete himself away from visual temptation. At present, let us briefly consider the first strategy, in which the visual object itself is concealed.

Greco-Roman ideas about clothing, architecture, gender, and respectability governed a series of strategies by which people would minimize certain types of exposure for fear of endangering their honor and their *pudicitia* (sexual virtue or modesty), and engendering *pudor*

⁷⁷ Cf. *Mekhilta Derabbi Shim'on bar Yohai* to Exodus 20:13 (ed. Epstein-Melamed, 153): "sees himself as if he is drinking from his friend's cup." See *t. Sotah* 5:9 (*b. Gittin* 90a-b).

(shame).⁷⁸ As Kate Cooper and others have argued, there was a direct relationship between one's status and the ability to limit one's visibility. The advent and spread of Christian values brought with it a shift in attitudes toward the exposure of the body, in which notions of sin and desire fueled greater care and emphasis on concealment, exemplified, but not exhausted by, the monastic instances discussed above.⁷⁹

In rabbinic culture, a woman's body was, at least theoretically, governed from head to hem by a thick web of laws prescribing the extent to which visibility was permissible.⁸⁰ In Tannaitic law, for example, a woman could be divorced (without compensation) for going about with her head uncovered, among other breaches of propriety and modesty.⁸¹ Similarly, a woman could be compensated for *boshet*, a tort which included the indignity of exposure.⁸² Such laws echo similar Roman laws designed to protect female (and male) dignity and honor.⁸³ However, even as these laws implicitly deal with vision and exposure, they are rarely explicitly thematized as such.

An exception to this comes in the Tannaitic ritual for the adulterous wife (*sotah*) that imagines a series of humiliations for the accused woman, which serve to invert common standards of propriety. In its stated measure-for-measure logic, *m. Sotah* highlights how the vision and visibility involved in adulterous seduction are mirrored in the humiliating exposures of the adulteress's punishment. The *sotah* promiscuously exhibited herself to her lover's gaze – for this her punishment is a spectacle.⁸⁴ Thus, because she put on eye makeup, the poisonous potion she is forced to drink makes her eyes bulge; because she girded her breasts, her dress is ripped to expose them to the viewing public; because she coiffed her hair, it is stripped of its customary covering; and so forth.⁸⁵ Not only do the Tannaim perpetuate ancient traditions in which promiscuous women work their magic partly by seducing male eyes, but they slip from condemning the adultery to condemning an array of behaviors deemed immodest (regardless of

⁷⁸ See Cooper, "Closely watched households," and Laglands, *Sexual Morality*, esp. 69–77, on the visibility of *pudicitia*.

⁷⁹ See Brown, *Body and Society*; Rousselle, *Porneia*; Clark, *Women*, 105–10; Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*.

⁸⁰ On women and head coverings, see *m. Shabbat* 6:5–6.

⁸¹ *M. Ketubot* 7:6–7; *t. Ketubot* 7:6–7; *b. Gittin* 90a–b.

⁸² *M. Bava Qamma* 8:1, 6 (includes the removal of a woman's head covering and a man's cloak among its list of indignities).

⁸³ E.g. shame (*iniuria*), violation (*stuprum*), and sexual indecency (*impudicitia*). On these terms see Lagland, *Sexual Morality*, 20–24, and Williams, "Pudicitia and pueri."

⁸⁴ She also transgressed as a viewer as she seductively "set her eyes" upon her lover. See below, n. 58.

⁸⁵ See Lev, "Sotah." On the use of kohl, i.e. cosmetic eye paint, see *m. Shabbat* 8:3 and *t. Sotah* 3:3. For painting just one eye and covering the rest of the face with a veil, see *y. Shabbat* 8:3, 11b (*b. Shabbat* 80a) and Tertullian, *De Verginibus Velandis*, 17.

adulterous consequence).⁸⁶ Women who cultivate the male eye are already suspect.

If the norms of respectable visibility imposed upon women by male authority are inferable from their transgression or reversal in the Tannaïtic *sotah* ritual, another interesting, if rare, instance in which female visibility is explicitly thematized concerns female-initiated stringency and is found in later Palestinian and Babylonian sources. This is the story of the Qimhit, a woman whose children all became high priests. In a *baraita* in the Bavli, the sages ask her what she did to obtain such singular merit; she explains that, “The beams of my house never saw the plaits of my hair.”⁸⁷ The Palestinian version of this anecdote adds, “the hem of my undergarment.”⁸⁸ Two things are noteworthy. First, the question and answer supply a version of the visual eugenics that recalls the back and forth of Imma Shalom and the sages. Secondly, here, the Qimhit’s very home has eyes: In the one place women were imagined to escape the public eye, a voyeuristic gaze persists. In the Palestinian version, the sages respond with enthusiastic praise. However, in the Babylonian version of the story they express skepticism, responding: “Many have done this but have not merited a reward.” Cynthia Baker sees this remark as an expression of ambivalence toward women taking control of their own visibility.⁸⁹ By escaping the gaze of her own house (even as a man’s wife is often referred to in rabbinic literature as “his house”) the Qimhit refuses not only the eroticizing gaze, but also the epistemic and disciplining eye of rabbinic law.⁹⁰ The Qimhit unsettles the Babylonian rabbinic eye by revealing nothing – she never reveals ‘ervah (broadly construed, including even hair and underclothing) – and consequently disrupts the male gaze that scrutinizes sex in order to constitute gender. In this regard her invisibility becomes conspicuous.

⁸⁶ The idea that the promiscuous woman makes herself hypervisible is a trope found in Ben Sira and in the *Testaments of the Patriarchs*. E.g. Ben Sira 9:8: “Turn your eyes from a beautiful woman and do not gaze upon beauty that is not for you; by a woman have many been ruined . . .” See also Ben Sira 41:20–21; *Testament of Reuben* 3:10, 4:1, 6:1; *Testament of Issachar* 4:1–4; *Testament of Judah* 12:3, 13:3, 13:45, 17:1; *Testament of Benjamin* 6:2–3. The female role in actively cultivating visibility, in terms of beauty and also by gazing suggestively at men, is particularly emphasized in *Testament of Reuben* 5:1–7. On the other hand, male vision is attended to in *Testament of Reuben* 3:10–4:1.

⁸⁷ *B. Yoma* 47a. This is another example of the type of abstinent visual eugenics that R. Elie’ezer deployed in the Imma Shalom passage, discussed above.

⁸⁸ *Y. Yoma* 1:1, 38d.

⁸⁹ Baker, *Rebuilding*, 64–70. On rabbinic resistance to woman-initiated piety, see Cohen, “Purity, piety, and polemic.”

⁹⁰ Note that in *b. Shabbat* 118b, R. Yose not only declares that he never looked at his penis, but also that the walls of his house never saw the hem of his undershirt (using the same language as *y. Yoma* 1:1, 38d). It is unclear whether this passage is lauding or mocking of R. Yose’s boasts. R. Yose also mentions that he refers to his wife as his house in the same passage.

While there are Babylonian stories that express wariness about those taking such radical steps to refuse vision, the opposite is true in monastic literature.⁹¹ There we find many accounts of women and men who voluntarily guard themselves from others' eyes. The *Lausiatic History* tells of Alexandra, who left the city of Alexandria and shut herself up, getting food and drink through a window; for years she did not look at the face of men or women, or allow hers to be seen.⁹² She explains that she undertook this practice because a man had gone crazy from his desire for her, and so she chose to bury herself alive rather than "scandalize a soul made in the image of God."⁹³

Male ascetics sought not only to protect their eyes but also to make themselves invisible. John of Lycopolis spent forty years as a recluse, "never beholding a woman's face or the sight of money."⁹⁴ Seclusion not only allowed him to control his vision but also his visibility.⁹⁵ There are many accounts of monks who locked themselves up or became recluses, so as "not to be seen by people," and whose project seemed to have been as much to restrict their visibility as to withdraw from their own sense of vision.⁹⁶ The tactic of protecting male eyes from problematic sights seems to stem from, and even support, expected gender roles of viewing and visibility. Yet, the practice of male self-isolation as a response to the everyday dangers of visual stimuli is not one we find in rabbinic sources.⁹⁷ There, we find a greater focus on generating restraints on the rabbinic eye than on taking the rabbi himself out of social circulation.⁹⁸ Perhaps this difference between rabbis and Christian monastics makes sense: rabbis were not eremitic monks; they

⁹¹ For example, *b. Yoma* 47a and arguably *b. Shabbat* 118b, as well as *b. Pesahim* 113a-b.

⁹² Palladius, *Lausiatic History* 5 (ed. Butler, 21). Cf. *b. Sotah* 22a where R. Yoḥanan overhears a virgin praying that she not cause anyone to sin.

⁹³ Ibid. (trans. Meyer, 36-37). Compare *b. Ta'anit* 24a, where a father curses his beautiful (*ba'alat yofi*) daughter to "return to ashes," so that she may not cause men to sin by seeing her, after a man peers at her through a hole in the fence.

⁹⁴ Palladius, *Lausiatic History*, 35:13 (ed. Butler, 105; ed. and trans. Meyer, 102-3). ⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Zacharias of Sakha, *The Syriac Life of Abba John the Little* 30 (*Holy Workshop*, ed. Mikhail and Vivian, trans. Greer, 222) – here Abba John makes a cave for these purposes.

⁹⁷ On this phenomenon see the numerous examples gathered in MacDermot, *Cult of the Seer*, esp. 22-35.

⁹⁸ The sugya in *y. Sanhedrin* 2:3, 20b (partial parallel in *y. Sukkah* 5:4, 55c; *b. Berakhot* 62b) juxtaposes a statement that women must follow men in funeral processions, "because of the honor of the daughters of Israel, so that they do not gaze at the women (*mippene kevod benot yisra'el shelo yehu mebbitin benashim*)," with Michal's criticism of David's genital exposure while dancing (2 Samuel 6:20), and then follows with a paean to the modesty of Saul's household: "Their heel and big toe never saw [their genitals; or: They never saw their heel or big toe]." Exegetical and associative connective logics aside, it suggests a conceptual link between the male gaze onto women and a rabbinic model for male visibility and modesty, which demands spatial reconfiguration rather than permanent removal of the visual object.

did not self-seclude in the same way, either from each other, or from the urban environment.⁹⁹

Averting the eye

Faced with the two choices of policing his own gaze or policing visual objects within his daily environment (whether female or other problematic sights), it would have been far easier for a Palestinian or Babylonian rabbi to opt for the former.¹⁰⁰ The inverse relationship between visual pleasure and prohibition could lead to the logical extreme of complete visual abstinence. We now turn to this visual strategy.

We find visual ascetics in both Palestinian and Babylonian sources. Palestinian sources go out of their way to associate such visual abstinence with “holiness.” They exalt Elisha who was called “holy” by the Shunamite woman, because “he never gazed at her his entire life.”¹⁰¹ They contrast Elisha’s ocular restraint with his disciple Gehazi, who is midrashically read to have actually grasped the woman’s breasts. The thin boundary between looking and acting, and looking and touching, is vividly illustrated here.

Palestinian sources favor the language of holiness when describing visual asceticism. We note that Rabbi Judah the Patriarch is called “our holy rabbi” because he “never in his life gazed at his circumcision,” and, in one instance, to R. Nahum bar Simay, who never gazed at figures on a coin and is called “holy of holies.”¹⁰² *Leviticus Rabbah* also makes the connection explicit in the passage regarding Elisha: “Wherever one finds guarding against *ervah*, one finds holiness.”¹⁰³ Such language is also found in the Bavli, but only, it will be observed, in reference to Palestinian rabbis. We will examine one such instance shortly.

⁹⁹ The story of R. Shim’on b. Yoḥai’s isolation (*b. Shabbat* 33b) stands out in this regard. On its relationship to monastic sources see Bar Asher Siegal, “Making of a monk-rabbi.”

¹⁰⁰ Although, see again *b. Ta’anit* 24a, which narrates the dream of annihilating women’s visibility by eliminating beautiful women. See also *y. ‘Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42c, which imagines rabbis covering Roman statues so that Naḥum bar Simay would not see them in death.

¹⁰¹ *Y. Sanhedrin* 10:2, 29b (paralleled in *y. Yevamot* 2:4, 3d), *Leviticus Rabbah* 24:6 (ed. Margalioṭ, 11:559–60). Contrast the Palestinian sources with *b. Berakhot* 10b, which omits mention of Elisha’s looking and focuses exclusively on what was (not) seen of him: The Shunamite woman “never saw a fly pass over his table or . . . a seminal emission on his sheets.” Cf. *b. Shabbat* 140b’s recommendations for proper behaviors for the *talmid ḥakham* (or *bar be rav*), including the warning that it is not proper behavior (*orakh ar’a*) to send one’s clothing to one’s host for cleaning, “lest he see something (i.e. a seminal emission) and come to despise him.”

¹⁰² *Y. ‘Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42c (paralleled in *b. Shabbat* 118b). See Diamond, *Holy Men*, 81–83. For the juxtaposition of illicit sexuality and idolatry see *b. ‘Avodah Zarah* 17a–b, where R. Hanina and R. Yonatan debate whether it is better to take a route that passes by an idolatrous temple or one that passes by a brothel.

¹⁰³ *Leviticus Rabbah* 24:6 (ed. Margalioṭ, 11:559).

Even without the language of holiness, the Bavli valorizes Abraham over Job on account of his visual abstinence. According to Rava, Abraham never looked upon his spouse, Sarah, until their arrival in Egypt; thus Abraham's exclamation: "Behold, I know what a beautiful woman you are" (Genesis 12:11).¹⁰⁴ Job, however, merely abstained from looking at virgins; that is, women who would not be adulterous visual objects anyway, because of their unmarried status. This partakes in the tendency we have noted in Babylonian traditions to contemplate and extend prohibition inside the sphere of the apparently permitted.¹⁰⁵

The Babylonian Talmud also supplies its own rabbinic-era visual heroes. We find a Babylonian blood-letter who only uncovered medically necessary areas, so that he would not look at the bodies of his clients, and a man who only discovered that his wife had no hand after her death.¹⁰⁶ While the latter is perhaps more shocking and is probably a better example of visual asceticism, the former speaks more to the everyday practices of propriety, particularly in situations that challenged such norms. We also find many stories in the Bavli of rabbis who succumb to temptation.¹⁰⁷ However, the heroic anecdotes and figures raise other questions: If, as we noted, there is some ambivalence in Babylonian sources about women who radically refuse the eroticizing masculine gaze, is there corresponding concern about men who give up the gaze?

In both Palestinian and Babylonian sources, to differing degrees, we see that the rabbis imagined the gaze as a phallus. We have noted how prohibition, therefore, served to uphold a binary division of visual labor, based on the premise of an active, penetrative masculine (and male) gaze and a feminine (and female) visual object.¹⁰⁸ What then might be the consequences of taking prohibition to its logical conclusion and giving up the gaze completely? We end up, as we shall see, with the somewhat paradoxical result that total visual asceticism can destabilize the traditional

¹⁰⁴ *B. Bava Batra* 16a (paralleled in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Genesis 12:11).

¹⁰⁵ Relatedly, see *b. Qiddushin* 81b for the anecdote about R. Hiyya b. Abba, whose wife disguised herself as a prostitute, recounting his shame at responding to her overtures after discovering the truth.

¹⁰⁶ See *b. Ta'anit* 21b, regarding the bloodletter (a contemporary of Abbaye) Abba who covered his female client in order to avoid looking at her (*dela nistakkel bah*). See *b. Shabbat* 53b, about the man who only discovered upon the death of his wife that she had been missing a hand. Rav praises the woman for her modesty, while R. Hiyya directs his praise towards the husband, arguing that such modesty is expected of women. On not looking at women, even one's own wife, see *b. Berakhot* 61a and *b. Erubin* 18b.

¹⁰⁷ See, e.g., *b. Qiddushin* 81a, where various Tannaim fall prey to Satan, manifested as a woman.

¹⁰⁸ We have also seen occasional discomfort with a male-on-male gaze (even when a man gazes upon himself), which destabilizes this gendered division of visual labor.

binary, gendered division of visual labor. Here is a remarkable example of this:¹⁰⁹

“Concerning three does the Holy One, Blessed be He, make proclamation every day: a bachelor who lives in a large town without sinning, a poor person who returns a lost object to its owner, and a rich person who tithes his produce in secret.”

Rav Safra was a bachelor living in a large town. Now a *tanna* recited [this teaching] before Rava and Rav Safra. Rav Safra’s face colored (*tsahavu panav*).¹¹⁰ Rava said to him: “It does not mean those like you, but rather those like R. Hanina and R. Osha’yah, who were shoemakers in the land of Israel. They dwelt on a street of prostitutes and made shoes for prostitutes.¹¹¹ When they went in to them (*‘ayyele lehu*),¹¹² they [the prostitutes] looked at them (*mistakkele behu*), but they [the rabbis] would not lift their eyes to look at them (*la medallan ‘enayhu le’istakkule behu*). And they would swear by them thus: ‘By the life of the holy rabbis of the land of Israel.’”¹¹³

In this Babylonian narrative, the Palestinian setting of the embedded narrative is ostentatiously marked. “The land of Israel” is mentioned once in Rava’s introduction of the story, and then the prostitutes refer to their rabbinic shoemakers as “the holy rabbis of the land of Israel.” This narrative is embedded within a Babylonian study session, and is cited by Rava in order to humble Rav Safra, who assumes the initial praise refers to him. The device of the nested story marks this holy asceticism as a particularly Palestinian piety. Palestinian rabbis figure in Bavli narrative, sometimes as models of piety, sometimes as objects of critique. As noted, the conjoining of visual asceticism and holiness may originate in Palestine (in terms of both sources and rabbinic protagonists).¹¹⁴ However, we will see that even if the fourth-century Rava’s example of the two late third-century Palestinian Amoraim is meant

¹⁰⁹ The example showcases the combination of rabbis’ visual asceticism and their integration into an urban environment. The opening statement is given by R. Yohanan in printed versions. Mss have either no introduction or, in one case (Munich 6), *tanu rabbanan*.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *b. Sanhedrin* 105a; *b. Menahot* 18a, 68b. Just this phrase and the opening statement are in Hebrew.

¹¹¹ See Sperber, *City*, 12–16.

¹¹² Munich 95 and Vatican Mss have variations upon: *‘ve’ayyele umesayyeme lehu vela medalle ‘enayhu le’istakkule behu*. Columbia, JTSA 850, and JTSA 271 have the same but omit the verb *‘-l-l*. Oxford has *‘ve’ayyele umesayyeme lehu bikhra ‘ayhu vela medallu ‘enayhu le’istakkule beh*.’ Munich 6 omits describing the rabbis as living in the red-light district and also omits *‘-l-l*. Instead it has: ‘they went (*‘-z-l*) to the market of the dwelling of prostitutes.’ I prefer to translate *s-m-y* as blind (versus “ignore”) to convey the story’s ocularcentric play. Note that *‘-l-l* can have a sexual connotation.

¹¹³ *B. Pesahim* 113a–b.

¹¹⁴ For example, Richard Kalmin views *b. Bava Metsi’a* 84a as a Babylonian critique of Palestinian rabbis; see Kalmin, *Sage*, 2.

to humble his colleague, their roles qua models of piety are reworked by the Babylonian storyteller in the story that follows, and transformed into something of a satire or perhaps even critique.

The anecdote sharply juxtaposes great piety with extreme licentiousness.¹¹⁵ Two saintly sages set up shop and home in a red-light district, making their resistance to temptation a great feat of restraint.¹¹⁶ Prostitutes visit the rabbi-shoemakers to have their shoes fitted. They “went in to them,” a phrase with clear sexual connotations, and “gazed at them,” in an attempt to ply their trade. In a curious gender reversal, the prostitutes bear the phallic gaze, intent on penetrating the rabbis’ chastity, apparently by soliciting a reciprocal gaze. The rabbis, however, “would not lift their eyes to look at them,” greatly impressing their would-be seducers, who subsequently swear by them and their holiness.¹¹⁷

What is at stake in this refusal to look? For one thing, the prostitutes not only transgress normative feminine visual gender roles by gazing so assertively at the rabbis; as is the case with the *sotah* and elsewhere, the notion of gazing, or “setting one’s eyes upon,” is applied to those who gaze illicitly or covetously, seeking an answering gaze. The prostitutes are seeking a reciprocal gaze, a homovisuality that, when realized, becomes ocular intercourse. In the previous chapter, homovisuality when involving God and humans did not expressly involve a sexualized element. The latter was, however, strongly apparent in the Babylonian heterovisual conception of *re’iyah*.

Certainly the notion of ocular desire was not new or unique to the rabbis. As Blake Leyerle puts it, “[T]he ancient Greeks had understood eros to be a pathology of the eyes.”¹¹⁸ This notion finds its cautionary equivalent in the reprimands of various Jewish and Christian sources from Ben Sira to John Chrysostom. Xenophon of Ephesus’ mid-second-century CE *Ephesian Tale* places it in the positive context of love, when the heroine Anthia kisses the

¹¹⁵ On the motif of rabbis and prostitutes, see Fishbane, “Go and enjoy your acquisition.”

¹¹⁶ See *b. Berakhot* 32a, which compares Israelite idolatry in Egypt to someone who sets his son up as a perfume-seller in the red-light district and then rebukes him for consorting with prostitutes. See McGinn, *Economy of Prostitution*, 18. On the term “innkeeper” for prostitute or madam in the Roman world, see Sperber, *City*, 17. On rabbinic and Christian ambivalence about inns, for this reason, see Dauphin, “Brothels, baths and babes.” What follows in my analysis regarding the prostitutes’ gazes is only explicit in the Venice and Vilna printed editions, which specify that “they looked at them.” It is only implied in the Mss.

¹¹⁷ The language works well here: the rabbis lower their gaze to avoid looking at their clients and also to do their job. Cf. Oxford: they were blind to their legs and did not raise their eyes to look at them (*umesayyeme lehu bikbra’ayhu vela medallu ‘enayhu le ‘istakkule behi*).

¹¹⁸ Leyerle, “John Chrysostom, 160.”

eyes of Habrocomes and describes them as having “first planted the goad in my heart.”¹¹⁹ Such novels also express the intensity that results when two sets of desiring eyes meet. This is the moment of homovisuality, that is, when eye strikes eye, and vision is reciprocal. As discussed in Chapter 1, we see the desire for this moment of ocular reciprocity in *Leucippe and Clitophon*:

So when Leucippe heard the doors opening (there was already a light inside), she raised her head a moment and then cast her eyes down again. Thersandros glimpsed her loveliness for a fleeting second, like a lightning flash (for beauty resides especially in the eyes), and his soul went out to her. He stood fixed by the sight, waiting for the moment when she would look up again to him. As she kept her head lowered, he said: “Why do you look downwards, woman? Why let the loveliness of your eyes spill onto the earth? Let it flow rather into these eyes of mine.”¹²⁰

Thersandros’ eyes wait eagerly to receive the flow emitted from Leucippe’s. A complex of intro- and extramission allows vision to make its way from one lover to the other. Here, Thersandros beholds Leucippe’s loveliness, but she withholds her ocular response and with it the intercourse that he so desires. It is thus that *Leucippe and Clitophon* describes the pleasure of looking at the beloved as “greater than that of consummation” and as a kind of “copulation at a distance” and “intimate embrace.”¹²¹

These examples give us more of a clue as to what is at stake in the lowered gaze of the rabbis who refuse the aggressive, transgressive, and, in the rabbinic visual economy, penetrative gaze of the prostitutes. The rabbis must lower their eyes; if not, (ocular) intercourse will occur. Carlin Barton has shown how the lowered gaze in Roman culture could serve to preserve the subject’s bodily integrity and also to manifest a certain honorable shame.¹²² We see a similar deployment of the lowered gaze in Syriac writings, for example, in the narrative of the Christian martyr Anahid:

On reaching the nobles gathered in Adurfrazgard’s presence, Tahmin entered and announced the arrival of the chaste girl. Adurfrazgard and the notables

¹¹⁹ We get closer to the sort of exchange of gazes that the rabbis deny when Anthia dubs Habrocomes’ eyes “ministers” for guiding him to loving her, referring to her own eyes as “ministers of Habrocomes” (Xenophon, *Ephesiaca*, 1.9.7–8, trans. Anderson, 133). On eyes as “ambassadors of love,” see *Leucippe and Clitophon* 1.9.5. See also “Ephesian tale,” trans. Anderson, 133, n. 5. For a Zoroastrian example, see the description of Ohrmazd and Spandarmad gazing at each other (*Pahlavi Rivayat* 8).

¹²⁰ *Leucippe and Clitophon* 6 (Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, trans. Winkler, 252).

¹²¹ *Leucippe and Clitophon* 1.9.4–5 (trans. Winkler, 183). ¹²² Barton, “Being in the eyes.”

who were with him were overjoyed when they heard this, and most of the people present pushed their way outside to take a look at Anahid. "This is indeed Anahid the mistress," they shouted; "more beautiful and desirable than any other woman!" The chaste girl did not raise her eyes in the slightest to look at them.¹²³

Here, Anahid quite deliberately refuses to look back, even as she is being visually objectified. The text makes clear that this redounds to her credit. Both of these two non-rabbinic examples affirm the expected gendered order of things, in which the modest woman preserves her honor by casting her eyes downward. This, as we know, has to do with the expected gendering of penetration and reception, upheld also in rabbinic culture.

Writings such as the *Testament of Reuben* specifically warn that "by their glance they [women] sow the poison."¹²⁴ The sentiments expressed there, and in sources like *m. Sotah*, move along all points of the illicit visual erotic economy: the female visual object (who attempts to seduce with her appearance), the male viewer (who must curb his eye), and, perhaps most transgressive of all, the desiring female eye.¹²⁵ The dangers that female eyes, in particular, held for men were highlighted in the Song of Songs, Proverbs, Ben Sira, and the *Testaments of the Patriarchs* and church fathers; authors from Tertullian to Jerome warned against the power of women's eyes.¹²⁶ As John Chrysostom put it, "The eye not only of the wanton but even of the modest woman pierces and disturbs the soul."¹²⁷ Madeline Caviness's understanding of such warnings is helpful here: She sees them as gynophobia that is based in a fear "of being entered."¹²⁸ If we take seriously the rabbinic idea that seeing is equivalent to intercourse, then refusing to answer the women's gaze ensures male integrity, as Barton puts it.¹²⁹

However, the lowering of the rabbis' gaze also accomplishes another curious effect. The male rabbis are objects of a female gaze (even implicitly); this is effected when they do not look. A curious reversal of normative

¹²³ The *Acts of Anāhīd*, in Bedjan (ed.), *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, vol. II, 588 (trans. Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women*, 89). See also *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, 590–91 (trans. Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women*, 90). The *Persian Martyr Acts* were composed around the fifth century. See Asmussen, "Acts of Ādur-Hormīz and of Anāhīd."

¹²⁴ *Testament of Reuben* 5.3 (trans. Hollander and de Jonge, *Twelve Patriarchs*, 16; ed. de Jonge, *Twelve Patriarchs*, 9).

¹²⁵ Notably the male visual object is missing here.

¹²⁶ See, e.g., Song of Songs 4:9, "You have wounded my heart by one of your eyes."

¹²⁷ John Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio* 6.8 (Sources Chrétiennes 272.332) (trans. Leyerle, "John Chrysostom," 163).

¹²⁸ See Caviness, *Visualizing Women*, 21.

¹²⁹ Another interesting possibility is that the rabbis are acknowledging and suppressing their own desire to look lustfully, so that their lowered eyes become a badge of shame. Thanks to Gil Klein.

gender and gaze dynamics ensues, not only in terms of eros, but also in the related terms of power.¹³⁰ Here, we might think back to the dynamics at play between the blind rabbi and his rabbinic visitors, discussed in Chapter 2, and indeed to the basic imbalance that underlies a post-temple, post-reciprocal visual economy, in which Jews are viewed by God, the unseen seer.¹³¹ The objectification of these rabbis is further enhanced when the prostitutes invoke them and their sanctity in their oath taking, surely the epitome of a mixed compliment. The rabbis come by this honor at the price of an objectified passivity. Indeed, one might wonder whether the Babylonian Talmud itself takes a certain ironic pleasure in the sight of eye-averting rabbis, who are, after all, in the employ of these transgressive women and who come by their exalted title while equipping prostitutes for their illicit trade.¹³²

Something of this combination of idealization and satire may also be at play in a fascinating story that Sozomen relates about Ephrem, who is said to have guarded against looking (*theān*) at women.¹³³ In this story, a prostitute “contrived to meet him face to face in a narrow passage and stared at him (*blepousan*).” As with the Palestinian and Babylonian storytellers who wove their tale about Rabban Gamaliel and the beautiful gentile woman and who then ask “but was it his practice to gaze at women,” here too the holy man is redeemed by the urban landscape. He was compelled, we are told, by circumstance or devious design, to look against his will.¹³⁴ Like the prostitutes in *b. Pesahim* 113b, Sozomen’s prostitute stares at her object of seduction; unlike Thersandros’ supplication to Leucippe, in this narrative Ephrem rebukes the woman and orders her to turn her gaze earthwards. Here the narrative twist lies in the woman’s reply. She tells

¹³⁰ Even as it troubles gender, our rabbinic narrative also upholds it. The very fact that it takes prostitutes, whose trade is transgressive promiscuity, to figure the female gaze tells us much about rabbinic ideas about women’s eyes. It is interesting to note that the language R. Yose uses in *b. Shabbat* 118b, following the Qimhī’s usage in *y. Yoma* 1:1, 38d, is in the passive voice, perhaps bespeaking feminization. This contrasts with the active use of *s-k-l* by R. Judah in *y. Megillah* 1:10, 72b.

¹³¹ The rabbis thus become bound up in a heterovisual economy, even if it is one that does not correspond to a normative heterosexual paradigm.

¹³² See Judith 16:9: “Her sandal ravished his eye, her beauty took his soul captive.” The prostitute’s shoes and feet were a recognized part of her advertisements in the Greco-Roman world; see Montserrat, *Sex and Society*. For the use of shoes by prostitutes to lure clients, see Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.11; by Jewish women to attract Roman soldiers, see *Leviticus Rabbah* 16:1 (ed. Margaliot, 1:341–44); paralleled in *b. Yoma* 9b.

¹³³ Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.16. For the historical unreliability of Sozomen’s account, see Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise*, 19. I am less interested in the historical Ephrem than in how holiness is signaled by abstention from looking at women.

¹³⁴ The excuses of the urban setting, with its narrow paths and passages, and the forcible entry by problematic women, also serve to reverse more traditionally gendered images.

Ephrem that given that he (as a man) is born of the earth, he is the one who should lower his gaze, whereas she (a woman born of man) should be looking at him.¹³⁵ Ephrem is so impressed that, as Sozomen tells it, he records this in his writings.

What does this fifth-century Palestinian account about a Mesopotamian figure share with the Mesopotamian rabbis' anecdote about their Palestinian forebears? A preoccupation with gaze, gender, sexuality, and transgression. In both instances, a prostitute, the embodiment of the ultimate gender-gaze transgression, aggressively confronts the holy man with her gaze; and in both cases, there is a reversal of sorts. The prostitute's teaching merits inclusion in Ephrem's writings: he learns from her; and the prostitutes crown the rabbis as holy men.¹³⁶ Both narratives uphold men as visual objects who do not look back, whether as a strategy against seduction or as an acknowledgment of the prostitute's wisdom. In the Ephrem story, the prostitute makes the case that visual objectification is specifically bound up with being a man.¹³⁷ Ultimately, this is what visual asceticism at its most radical accomplishes: In giving up the male gaze, men become vulnerable to vision. The rabbinic narrative also gestures toward the reversals that come with the holy man's vulnerability.¹³⁸

Palestinian literature, like Christian writings, valorizes visual asceticism as holy. It does not, however, expand halakhic restrictions (or admonitions) on looking, in the manner of the Bavli. While the Bavli seems to also valorize visual asceticism, some of its stories featuring Palestinians (the Qimḥit and the shoemaker rabbis) question and critique certain forms of ostentatious asceticism. Babylonian sources suggest that in giving up the gaze there is the possibility of gender trouble.

Beautiful men

In the stories of prostitutes and holy men, men who choose not to look turn into visual objects under a female gaze. This ascetic impulse upsets

¹³⁵ On the implications of this for sex positions, see *b. Niddah* 31b (men who are created from the earth turn toward it, while women who were created from man's rib turn toward him). For a similar argument about males born looking downwards and females looking upwards, see *Genesis Rabbah* 17:8 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 1:158–59).

¹³⁶ See the Syriac *Life of Pelagia* 4–10 (ed. Bedjan, *Acta Martrum et Sanctorum*, vol. VI, 619–49; trans. Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women*, 42–44) for an example of a beautiful prostitute who draws all eyes toward herself.

¹³⁷ Ephrem is told that his gaze should be downcast, that he should be an unseeing visual object.

¹³⁸ See Theodoret, *Historia Religiosa* 1.4, in which James of Nisibis rebukes girls for immodesty and staring.

the basic binary principle of male (and masculine) gaze and female (and feminine) visual object. As a result, these male visual objects run the risk of feminization.¹³⁹ Visibility itself tended to be gendered as feminine in late-antique sensibilities. As we noted in the story of Rabban Gamaliel and the beautiful gentile woman, the gendering of visibility and visual pleasure is often put in the language of beauty. Beauty, that visual quality that summons the eye, also stimulates the senses and the emotions, producing desire.

This section of our chapter looks at the problem of beautiful men. It begins by looking at rabbinic readings of the biblical Joseph. The treatment of Joseph sets up two strands of rabbinic conceptions of beautiful men, which we then follow: the “feminization” of Jews vis-à-vis their gentile rulers via a dominating imperial gaze, and the feminizing, homoerotic implications of male beauty and the male visual object. As a beautiful male who is the object of a female gaze and an “imperial” gentile gaze, Joseph embodies both of these modes of troubling a binary gendered gaze.

Christian and Jewish sources alike invoke beauty as both praiseworthy gift and tempting trap and typically they associate it, along with its deliberate cultivation, with femininity.¹⁴⁰ Thus, men who were deemed overly beautiful, or who sought to enhance their beauty, were often considered unmanly and feminine. We find such mixed messages about beauty and gender, men and women, masculinity and femininity, in Jewish and Christian writings from Ben Sirah to Paul, Clement, Tertullian, and the rabbis.¹⁴¹

A few examples will have to suffice. The fourth-century CE *Apostolic Constitutions* warns men against “adorning” themselves “in a manner that may entice another woman to you.”¹⁴² The worry is that a woman will be “upon sight of you . . . smitten in her mind . . . wounded in her heart

¹³⁹ We might think about the tendency of monks and nuns, noted before, to refuse to be seen by women or men as a measure designed to protect their masculine or feminine integrity.

¹⁴⁰ See also the Zoroastrian text *Ardā Wirāz* 73 (ed. Vahman, 165, 213) for the gruesome sight of the souls of women who beautified themselves and sought to catch the eyes of pious men. Contrast this with the vision of the righteous soul whose body is described as that of a beautiful woman (*Ardā Wirāz* 4 (ed. Vahman, 90–93, 194–95)).

¹⁴¹ See Cobb, *Dying to be Men*, III, 121, 126, 144, who notes how the narrative gaze tends to focus on the beauty of female rather than male martyrs, seeing beauty along with modesty and fertility as “quintessentially ‘womanly’ qualities.” In *Joseph and Aseneth*, the narrative gaze extols both Joseph’s and Aseneth’s beauty, the former through the eyes of Aseneth, the latter through the eyes of Pharaoh’s son. For description and praise of Sarai’s beauty, see *Genesis Apocryphon* (1Qap Gen^{ar}; description of Sarai’s beauty, column 20).

¹⁴² *Apostolic Constitutions* 1.2 (trans. in Roberts and Donaldson [eds.], *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. VII, 392). This was considered to cause adultery, even if the man did not reciprocate or act on the woman’s desire for him.

by your beauty, and youth, and adorning.”¹⁴³ Specifically, a man is told, “that beauty which God and nature has bestowed on you, do not further beautify.”¹⁴⁴ He is instructed not to grow his hair long or to anoint it, but rather to cut it short. He is ordered to wear simple garments rather than elaborate ones, and neither fine stockings nor shoes. He is enjoined not to wear jewelry or to style his hair or to shave. Such instructions are quite explicitly framed in terms of gender: “For God the Creator has made this decent for women, but has determined that it is unsuitable for men.”¹⁴⁵ Similarly, Clement of Alexandria, in the early third century CE, encourages men not to shave their beards (“an ample beard is appropriate for men”), but to shave the hair on their heads. He adds, “His hair should not be braided, nor should it hang down, flowing luxuriantly like a woman’s.”¹⁴⁶ One need not posit uniformity across the varieties of Christian, Jewish, Greco-Roman, and Mesopotamian practices of viewing and displaying gender to acknowledge how such ideas were also funded by the ancient Greek and Babylonian sciences of physiognomy, which besides being methods for reading faces and bodies, also supplied (varying) prescriptive techniques of self-cultivation.¹⁴⁷

Christian, Greco-Roman, and Jewish sources specifically decry or mock unmanly beauty in men, which is often characterized as such in men who cultivate their own looks, and therefore their own visibility.¹⁴⁸ The biblical Joseph becomes a challenging figure for the rabbis in this regard. The Bible describes his great beauty as the premise for his attempted seduction by his master’s wife. Joseph, of course, resists her efforts and suffers as a result. On the one hand, Joseph’s beauty cannot be disputed – it is, after all, explicit in the Bible (Genesis 39:6); on the other hand, neither can Mrs. Potiphar’s desire for him. On account of the former, Joseph becomes the ultimate emblem of male beauty for the rabbis. Because of the attempted seduction,

¹⁴³ Note the tactile and sensory language of pain. ¹⁴⁴ *Apostolic Constitutions* 1.2.

¹⁴⁵ *Apostolic Constitutions* 1.2. This is also put in terms of gendered image theology, for men, following a particular reading of the Genesis account, are made in God’s own image, unlike women who hail from Adam’s rib. Women are the subject of rules including covering the head to avoid being looked at, not putting on makeup, and looking downward (*Apostolic Constitutions* 3; Roberts and Donaldson (eds.), *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, vol. vii, 395).

¹⁴⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 3.11 (*Clement of Alexandria*, trans. Wood, 247). See also 2.3 for more of the many characterizations of the habits of men who take care with their appearances as feminine, including coiffing and shaving. For a Syriac source, see *Didascalia Apostolorum* 2. See Jensen, “Femininity,” esp. 270.

¹⁴⁷ On traditions of physiognomy, see Bottéro, “Symptômes, signes, écritures”; Gleason, “Semiotics of gender”; William, *Roman Homosexuality*. The library at Qumran also included physiognomical texts. On these and their Greco-Mesopotamian sources, see Popović, *Reading the Human Body*.

¹⁴⁸ For the prohibition against looking in a mirror (and exceptions), see *t. ‘Avodah Zarah* 3:5; *y. Shabbat* 6:1, 7d; *y. ‘Avodah Zarah* 2:2, 41a; *b. ‘Avodah Zarah* 29a.

the rabbis view Joseph as a man of heroic virtue, while also implicating him.

The fifth-century Palestinian midrashic collection *Genesis Rabbah* and the Bavli both contain several traditions characterizing Joseph as “immune to the evil eye.”¹⁴⁹ In the former case, the lasciviously gazing Mrs. Potiphar personifies the evil eye.¹⁵⁰ In the Bavli, Joseph’s immunity from the evil eye, which is provoked by his great beauty, is due to his refusal “to feast his eye on what did not belong to him.”¹⁵¹ The Palestinian sources bring both ends of the visual economy – Joseph’s eyes and those who gaze at him – together, explaining that when he walked the streets of Egypt, princesses would peer at him through lattices and throw jewelry at him so that he would “lift up his eyes and look at them; nonetheless, he would not look at them.”¹⁵²

Even as they announce his virtue, Palestinian sources state that Joseph had every intention of sleeping with Potiphar’s wife but was only stopped from consummating his desire when his upright “bow” was felled by the sight of his father’s or his mother’s image (*ikonin*, from the Greek *eikonion*).¹⁵³ Most interesting for our purposes, is how the Palestinian midrash blames Joseph for luring Mrs. Potiphar’s eyes:

[“His master’s wife cast her eyes at Joseph” (Genesis 39:7).]

What precedes this passage? “And Joseph was of beautiful form, and fair to look upon” (Genesis 39:6). [And this is immediately followed by] “His master’s wife cast her eyes [at Joseph].”

[It may be compared] to a man who sat in the street, making up (or ‘rougeing’) his eyes, curling his hair, and lifting his heel, while he exclaimed, “I am indeed a man. [Some mss. I am beautiful (*ya’ey*), I am a mighty man (*gibbor*).]”

¹⁴⁹ *Genesis Rabbah* 97:4 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1224). For other accounts of Joseph’s vulnerability and immunity to the evil eye, see *Genesis Rabbah* 84:10 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, II:1013), 97:3 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1224, 1246). See Kugel, *In Potiphar’s House*.

¹⁵⁰ The notion that the beautiful courted the evil eye was widespread in antiquity and is attested in Jewish sources. See *b. Berakhot* 55b; Ulmer, *Evil Eye*; Harari, “Sages and the occult”; Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*; Turan, “Wherever the sages set their eyes”; Ross, “Notes”; Thomson, “Evil eye.”

¹⁵¹ *B. Berakhot* 20a; see also *b. Berakhot* 55b; *b. Sotah* 36b; *b. Bava Metsi’a* 84a; *b. Bava Batra* 118b; *b. Zevahim* 118b.

¹⁵² *Genesis Rabbah* 98:18 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1268–69).

¹⁵³ *Genesis Rabbah* 87:7 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1072–73), 98:20 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1270); *y. Horayot* 2:5, 46d; *b. Sotah* 36b. The midrashim of Joseph’s near-sinching also inject a virile masculinity to an otherwise troubling gender. Joseph himself is described as Jacob’s spitting image (*ziv ikonin*) in *Genesis Rabbah* 84:5 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, II:1010), and as resembling his mother Rachel in *Genesis Rabbah* 86:6 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, II:1059). Thanks to Adam Parker for his wonderful suggestion that Joseph is looking in a mirror when he sees his father’s image.

They said to him, "If you are a man, here is a bear; get up and fight it!"¹⁵⁴

While the rabbis cannot dispute Joseph's beauty, they can implicate him in its cultivation through their parabolic figure. They play with his complicity in pointedly gender-troubled terms: Joseph's ways of dressing and moving around are described in language most often reserved for female promiscuity, and this is juxtaposed with his declaration of manliness.¹⁵⁵ Joseph attends too much to his hair, eyes, and deportment. While the Bible does not present Joseph's beauty in anything but neutral or even positive terms, the rabbis express ambivalence about it and read it as purposeful gender transgression.

However, to reiterate, even as the rabbis suggest that Joseph's erotic visibility may have been related to his troubled gender, they emphasize that he never meets the gaze of those women attempting to entice him.¹⁵⁶ In one midrash, Mrs. Potiphar puts an iron fork to Joseph's neck to force him to look at her, but still he resists.¹⁵⁷ In this line of midrashic exegesis, he is, like the cobbler-rabbis, a visual object but not a seeing subject. At most, he is a gorgeous object, apparently guilty of taking a certain pleasure in his own beauty.¹⁵⁸ Both his virtue and his vanity are described by the rabbis in terms of visual eros: its cultivation and its suppression.

¹⁵⁴ *Genesis Rabbah* 87:3 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1063). Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 22:6 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, I:211–12), "When he [the evil inclination] sees a man dressed up, making up (or "rougeing" as per *Leviticus Rabbah* 12:1; *Proverbs* 23:29) his eyes, curling his hair, and lifting his heel, he says, 'This one is mine.'" See also *Genesis Rabbah* 84:7 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, II:1008) on *Genesis* 37:2, which describes Joseph as a seventeen-year-old youth (*na'ar*): "He was seventeen years old, but you say he was a boy? Rather, [it means] that he was engaged in childish behavior (*ma'aseh na'arut*, or girlish behavior), making up his eyes, curling his hair, and lifting his heel." On this and other rabbinic and ancient Jewish traditions that queer Joseph's gender, see Boustán, "Eunuchs." Cf. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House*, 79, on Joseph as a "dandy." Note that these traditions focus on Joseph's eyes whether as part of his seductive sexuality or as an emblem of his virtue. On Joseph's beauty, see *Testament of Simon* 5:1 and *Testament of Joseph* 18:4.

¹⁵⁵ For more examples of the feminization of seduction and appearances (eye makeup, shoes, tinkling, lifting legs, etc.), see *Leviticus Rabbah* 16:1 (ed. Margalit, I:341–44); *Lamentations Rabbah* 4:15 (ed. Buber, 75b–76a); *b. Shabbat* 62b; *b. Yoma* 9b. Curled hair signifies for a certain type of male beauty, as is evident in the emphatically visual story in *t. Nazir* 4:7. Its deliberate cultivation through coiffing is taken as a sign of transgressive sexuality in both men and women.

¹⁵⁶ We may even read the Palestinian tradition that Joseph almost succumbed to temptation as an effort to redeem his masculinity.

¹⁵⁷ *Genesis Rabbah* 87:10 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1075–76).

¹⁵⁸ To the extent that Joseph is presented as a seeing subject, he sees an *icon* of his father (or mother), which stops him from sleeping with Potiphar's wife; see above, p. 149 and n. 153. See also *Genesis Rabbah* 87:5 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1068). On Jacob's face, see *Joseph and Aseneth* 7:4–5: "Joseph said: 'I will not sin before the Lord God of my father Israel nor in the face of my father Jacob.' And the face of his father Jacob, Joseph always kept before his eyes, and he remembered his father's commandments."

This last feature, Joseph's self-awareness, reveals one of the ways in which male beauty troubles the rabbis. As scholars have argued for the tale of Narcissus, the story of a man's discovery of his own beauty does not just thematize the dangers of vanity and the feminizing of gender, but also arouses (anxieties about) the homoerotic gaze.¹⁵⁹ Another significant aspect of Joseph's refusal to return the gaze of Mrs. Potiphar is the context of his Egyptian captivity and enslavement. Joseph's beauty can serve as a useful paradigm not only for the feminizing effect of a rapacious gentile and imperial gaze, but also for the homoerotic dangers of male beauty. We turn first to how the rabbis depicted the imperial gaze before returning to an intra-rabbinic visual eros toward the figure of R. Yoḥanan, a self-proclaimed beauty and rabbinic "descendant" of Joseph.

Jewsploitation and the imperial gaze

Thus far we have seen how Palestinian and Babylonian sources eroticize the gaze in gendered terms: first, in the most bluntly gendered terms aligned with visible sex; then in terms of rabbinic masculinity (vis-à-vis other men and gentiles); thirdly, in terms of prohibition, with the extreme logical outcome of visual abstinence, which in turn upsets gender and elicits ambivalent rabbinic reactions; and, finally, in terms of male visual objects, particularly those possessed of the quintessential visual aphrodisiac of beauty. Here we examine rabbinic meditations on gentiles and their visual-sexual exploitation of beautiful male Jews.¹⁶⁰

In the seventies of the first century CE, the Romans minted a set of coins to mark their defeat of the Jewish Revolt. While a variety of iconographical motifs appear on these *Judea capta* coins, many depict an armed Roman soldier towering over a mournful, seated woman who leans on her arm, head downcast, as the soldier looks down at her.¹⁶¹ The woman represents the territory and populace of Judea; that is, she stands for the Jews who are rendered passive, feminized visual objects by their defeat. The soldier not

¹⁵⁹ See Bruhm, *Reflecting Narcissus*. Cf. *t. Nazir* 4:7 (paralleled in *Sifre Numbers* 22 [ed. Horowitz, 26]; *y. Nazir* 1:7, 51c; *y. Nedarim* 1:1, 36d; *b. Nazir* 4b; *b. Nedarim* 9b) which recounts how a beautiful, gorgeous-eyed, curly-haired (description presented as the visual testimony of Simon the Righteous) shepherd boy gazed ("nistakkalti") at his reflection and confronted his own potentially annihilating gaze of desire. See below, nn. 48, 155.

¹⁶⁰ On "Jewsploitation" and its derivation from and relationship to "Blaxploitation," see Jackson and Moshin, "Scripting Jewishness."

¹⁶¹ Some depict a trophy of arms over the woman, others show bound males. Many show a seated woman under a palm tree (with or without a Roman soldier). For a study of *Judea capta* coinage and bibliography, see Vermeule, *Jewish Relations*. Compare the iconography of gender and gaze on other Roman *capta* coinage, e.g. *Aegyptio*, *Germania*, *Dacia*, and *Armenia capta* coins.

only represents the military power of Rome but is a symbol of masculinity, in stark contrast to the subjugated Judea. Here the imperial iconography distributes power across sex, gender, body language, and gaze. The visual economy has a lofty masculine gaze versus downcast feminine gaze.¹⁶² We also find coins depicting a male (meant to be Judea), often bound and sometimes nude. These figurations and configurations of sex undergird a basic gendering of Roman masculinity and Jewish femininity.¹⁶³ As Virginia Burrus puts it, "Roman imperialism aggressively imposed itself as a triumph of masculinity, dominating conquered nations as women or feminine males."¹⁶⁴

Rabbinic storytellers also employed the image of the exploited, feminized Jew, albeit to different ends from those of the Roman state. In some of these rabbinic narratives, the gendered nature of Jewish subjugation is expressed through accounts of Jewish women who are sexually humiliated, sometimes as part of a measure-for-measure punishment for having courted gentile eyes.¹⁶⁵ *Leviticus Rabbah*, for example, has a lengthy explication of Isaiah 3:16: "Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with necks stretched forth and ogling eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet; therefore, God will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion." Amoraic rabbis read the verse to refer to the seductive behavior of Jewish women, who "adorned themselves and went out like prostitutes"; they give a blow-by-blow account of the various devices these women used to lure the eyes of Roman governors and soldiers, each of which is punished in kind with a corresponding type of sexual humiliation at the hands of the Roman conquerors.¹⁶⁶ The violent,

¹⁶² See Lopez, *Apostle*, 26–55.

¹⁶³ For a nuanced and textured account of alternative and resistant masculinities that reconfigure the self-mastery associated with masculinity into a kind of "passive resistance," see Shaw, "Body/power/identity," 280.

¹⁶⁴ Burrus, "Mapping," 8.

¹⁶⁵ Thus, in *Leviticus Rabbah* 16:1 (ed. Margaliot, 1:341–44) and *b. Shabbat* 62b, Isaiah 3:16 ("Because the daughters of Zion are haughty . . . with wanton eyes, walking and mincing, making a tinkling with their feet") is read not only as a description of the promiscuous behavior of Jewish women, but as part of a measure-for-measure account of their eventual punishment. For each way the women "adorned themselves" and made themselves "beautiful" for Roman eyes (e.g. by "filling their eyes with kohl and beckoning"; cf. Isaiah's "wanton eyes"), they endure violent sexual assault. The measure-for-measure symmetry recalls *m. Sotah's* explicit rationale for the *sotah's* ordeal. We saw something akin to this feminization and sexualization of imperial conquest in the previous chapter's discussion of the shameful, sexualized exposure of the holy of holies.

¹⁶⁶ *Leviticus Rabbah* 16:1 (ed. Margaliot, 1:341–44); cf. *b. Shabbat* 62b. The language is emphatically visual. The women "show off their neck . . . to appear tall," so that the soldier or governor will "see me and take me." This hope is violently realized during the capture of Jerusalem when "they came out like prostitutes and a general saw them and took them, a governor saw them and took them, a commander saw them and took them."

tit-for-tat punishment of this female, but improperly feminine, sexualized spectacle recalls the punishment of the adulterous woman in *m. Sotah*. A similar logic runs through *b. 'Avodah Zarah* 18a, where R. Ḥanina b. Teradyon's daughter, overhearing Roman nobles walking behind her and complimenting "the beauty of her steps," measures her steps even more.¹⁶⁷ She ends up being forced into prostitution.¹⁶⁸ On one level, such tropes incriminate these victims of sexual exploitation for their transgression of scopical and gendered roles, and on another level they have the effect of implicating Jews in general in their domination by Rome. This has its echoes in the Joseph midrashim.

An opposite and inverse logic underpins martyrological stories, imagining exploitation in heroic and virtuous terms.¹⁶⁹ There are a cluster of tragic tales of imperial exploitation of Jews (men and women), redounding with visual motifs, in the Palestinian midrashic collection *Lamentations Rabbah* and in *b. Gittin* 58a.¹⁷⁰ These anecdotes feature the juxtaposition of beautiful Jewish looks and a rapacious Roman gaze, though the gaze is explicitly emphasized only in the Bavli.¹⁷¹ The anecdote to which we now turn, however, appears only in the Bavli:¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Recall the foot (and eye) motif in the Joseph midrashim, as well as the link between prostitution and feet below, n. 132.

¹⁶⁸ *B. 'Avodah Zarah* 18a. However, the story continues to show that her virtue remained intact. *Genesis Rabbah* 80:5 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:956) employs a similar logic, reading, "Now Dinah went out . . . and Shekhem son of Ḥamor . . . saw her" (Genesis 34:1), to mean that "Her arm became exposed." (Cf. *b. Ketubot* 65a, where Rava reacts with great lust upon seeing Homa's exposed arm.) *Targum Neofiti* reads Dinah's going out "to see" the local women as going out "to be seen" by the local men.

¹⁶⁹ For treatments of Christian martyrdom narratives that deploy an analytic of visibility, see Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, and Burrus, *Saving Shame*, 10–43. See again Shaw, "Body/power/identity," and Burrus, *Saving Shame*, on the complex gendering that ensues (in Burrus, particularly along scopical lines). See also Campbell, "Sacrificial spectacle."

¹⁷⁰ For example, the story of the four hundred boys and girls brought to Rome for sexual purposes who jumped into the sea rather than submit to their fate (*b. Gittin* 57b; *Lamentations Rabbah* 1:16 [ed. Buber, 41a–b]).

¹⁷¹ On the Greco-Roman novelistic motifs that appear in these stories, see Stern, "Captive woman." See also Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life*, 16–38, esp. 24, 30, and Levinson, "Tragedy of romance." Daniel Boyarin looks at the Babylonian versions of these stories in terms of emasculation and the gaze, but not in terms of the more literal, physical sense of sight. See Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 67–92, esp. 73.

¹⁷² *B. Gittin* 58a. It does not appear in the parallel collection in *Lamentations Rabbah*; it does, however, surface in a late Aramaic translation of the Bible (*Targum Lamentations* to *Lamentations* 4:2). The other three anecdotes are also replete with the theme of visual-sexual exploitation of Jews. They include (1) the story of the young R. Yishma'el b. Elisha, a boy with "beautiful eyes, face, and curly hair" who is rescued from a prison (in *b. Gittin* 58a, or brothel in the Palestinian versions); (2) the beautiful son and daughter of R. Yishma'el b. Elisha, who are captured by two different Romans who wish to have them reproduce; they embrace and weep until they die rather than fulfill their masters' wishes (paralleled in *Lamentations Rabbah*); (3) the gruesome story of Tsaphanat (so called "because all gazed, *tsafu*, at her beauty"), who is raped by a battalion of Roman soldiers and then

[It is written]: “The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold” (Lamentations 4:2). What is meant by “comparable to fine gold”? . . . It means that they put fine gold to shame with their beauty. Previously, the Roman nobility used to attach the seal of a ring in front of them and have intercourse in their bed. From now onwards they brought the sons of Israel, tied them to the foot of their beds, and had intercourse.

Before moving to the political implications of this anecdote, let us recall why it made sense for the rabbis to imagine the Romans putting images (or Jewish men) in front of them while having sex. As we noted in the case of Imma Shalom’s visually abstinent spouse, R. Eli’ezer, in *b. Nedarim* 20a, the logic undergirding this practice of visual eugenics is found in an abundance of sources: biblical, Mesopotamian, Indian, Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman.¹⁷³ In his *Gynaeciorum*, Soranus explains:

The tyrant of the Cyprians, who was misshapen, compelled his wife to look (*blepein*) at beautiful statues (*agalmata perikalla*) during intercourse and became the father of well-shaped children; and horse-breeders, during covering, place noble horses in front of the mares.¹⁷⁴

In their telling, the rabbis mark gazing during sex as a practice of Roman nobility, and, as we saw earlier, its inverse (not looking) is marked as rabbinic.¹⁷⁵ Both Roman and rabbinic sources also make clear that it was not just what was seen at the moment of intercourse, but also desirous looking in other contexts (for example, in accounts of women falling in love with statues), that could affect the fetus.¹⁷⁶ As *Genesis Rabbah* puts it:

stripped in the marketplace for a prospective ugly buyer who wishes to see her beauty. In the first story, R. Yishma’el’s beauty is expressed in the conventional terms of a certain type of youthful, feminine male beauty. The motif of youth, aside from pointing to the Roman practice of sexual relations between an older and a younger man, also seems to signify a vulnerability related to gender and power configurations. On R. Yishma’el’s beauty, see Boustan, “Rabbi Ishmael’s miraculous conception.” See also *t. Horayot* 2:5–7; *y. Horayot* 3:7, 48b.

¹⁷³ For Mesopotamian evidence, see the recommendation that a woman who is pregnant adulterously “constantly pray to Ishtar while looking at her husband all the time” while reciting “I shall what is inside my belly make look like my husband,” in Clay and Keiser, *Babylonian Records*, vol. iv, 12:31–37 (trans. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia*, 103).

¹⁷⁴ Soranus, *Gynaeciorum* 1.39 (trans. Temkin, 38). For an excellent account of “maternal impressions” and gynecological visual theory in rabbinic, *Hekhalot*, and Greco-Roman materials, see Boustan, “Rabbi Ishmael’s miraculous conception.”

¹⁷⁵ E.g. *b. Nedarim* 20b and *b. Bava Mets’ia* 84a.

¹⁷⁶ E.g. the first-century Aetius reports in the name of Empedocles: “How do offspring come to resemble others rather than their parents? [Empedocles says that] fetuses are shaped by the imagination (*phantasia*) of the woman around the time of conception. For, often women have fallen in love with statues of men and with images and have produced offspring which resemble them,” Aetius 5.12.2 (Diels, *Doxographi Graeci* 423; Empedocles, *Poem*, trans. Inwood, 193).

“And afterwards, when the sons of God came to the daughters of men [and they bore them children]” (Genesis 6:4). R. Berekhyah said: “A woman would go out into the marketplace, and she would see (*hayetah ro’ah*) a young man and lust after him (*umit’avvah lo*). She would go and have intercourse and bring forth a young man resembling him.”¹⁷⁷

This comports with the reversed practice in *b. Nedarim* 20a, where R. Eli’ezer avoids adulterous and spousal sights in order to ensure his offspring’s status, looks, and health. All three sources (*b. Nedarim* 20a, *Genesis Rabbah* 26:7, and *b. Gittin* 58a) imagine different variations of the gendering of the scopic regime: in *b. Nedarim*, a man attempts (not to) look at or visualize a woman; in *Genesis Rabbah*, we find a lusty and transgressive female gaze at males; and in *b. Gittin*, we have heterosexual Roman couples gazing at Jewish men, with homoerotic overtones.¹⁷⁸ As discussed previously, most Greco-Roman sources focus on the female gaze, but Pliny, like *b. Nedarim* 20a, allows for the impact of the male gaze. A similar lack of distinction between male and female progenitors is found in *b. Gittin* 58a. Whether presuming an intromissive theory of vision, in which the woman (and ultimately the fetus) is “impressed” by what she sees, or an extramissive theory, in which “sight (*opsis*) transmitted the features (*tupoi*)” onto the fetus, the rabbinic and Roman scenarios share a tactile understanding of vision and its effects.¹⁷⁹ We must also note an extremely interesting Zoroastrian source in which gazing during conception is supposed to give rise to black-skinned people.¹⁸⁰

B. Gittin 58a turns the beautiful Jewish youths into more than just eugenic visual objects; they also function as erotic visual stimuli.¹⁸¹ The Babylonian rabbis make these Jewish men into living substitutes for the

¹⁷⁷ *Genesis Rabbah* 26:7 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 1:254).

¹⁷⁸ For gentiles having sex in front of slaves as opposed to rabbis who drive away even mice and insects, see *b. Niddah* 16b–17a. For the Zoroastrian context for Babylonian rabbinic sexual practices, including eugenic concerns coupled with demonology, see Elman, “He in his cloak.”

¹⁷⁹ Galen, *De Theriaca ad Pisonem* 9 (in *Claudii Galeni*, ed. Kuhn, vol. xiv, 253; trans. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia*, 157). Note, though, that in most of the discussions about using images or visual objects for reproduction – whether human, equine, or ovine – e.g. Genesis 30:25–43; *Genesis Rabbah* 73:10 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, II:854) – substitutes are brought for the purposes of female eyes and arousal. This lack of distinction between male and female progenitors also goes for *Bundahišn* 14b (text and trans. in Lincoln, “Human unity,” 16; ed. and trans. Anklesaria, 136–37).

¹⁸⁰ *Bundahišn* 14b, on which see Lincoln, “Physiological speculation”; Lincoln, “Center of the world”; Shapira, “Zoroastrian sources.” My thanks to Moulie Vidas for his help in thinking through this puzzling source. See also n. 173 for an ancient Babylonian example.

¹⁸¹ It is striking that in the concatenation of tales in the Bavli, women are imagined actually to be abused, whereas the narratives involving males stop short of physical abuse.

material images that Romans would gaze at during sex.¹⁸² That the production of beautiful offspring was a likely motive for the Romans' behavior is implied from the biblical proof-text ("comparable to fine gold"), although it is possible that the "sons of Israel" were thought to have been used as much for aphrodisiac purposes as for image reproduction.¹⁸³ The use of visual stimuli is attested in another remarkable tradition in the Babylonian Talmud, in which Jezebel is said to have arranged to have images of prostitutes placed in front of Ahab in order to "heat" the usually "frigid" king.¹⁸⁴

The underlying analogy between the Jewish men and plastic art also brings home the heterovisuality of the gaze, in which Jewish men become quintessential visual objects. At the same time, the hope of producing children in the image of these Jews points to the slipperiness of the gaze in blurring subject and object and in confounding an essentially heterovisual gaze with the mimetic effects of a homovisual one.

On a number of levels, this is a far cry from the first-century Roman depictions of nude, bound Jewish males. This vignette of the beautiful Jewish men is not just a lament about the Roman colonization of Jewish bodies; it is also a paean to the pornographic effect of Jewish masculinity. Even more intriguing are the reproductive effects thereof, beneath which lies a rabbinic fantasy about Romans giving birth to what are, in fact, (copies of) Jews. What seems at first glance to be a story about Jewish sexual shame is actually a rather explicit fantasy about the Jewish origins of Rome, one that turns the gender and visual regime on its head.¹⁸⁵

We find motifs similar to *b. Gittin* 58a in another Babylonian story, which also trades in the imperial visual-sexual exploitation of Jewish men. This anecdote, in *b. Sanhedrin* 92b, also challenges a straightforward application of a binary gender and scopic regime. The story highlights the violence of the imperial gaze, rather than its exploitation:

R. Yoḥanan said: . . . When Nebuchadnezzar the wicked drove Israel into exile, there were among them young men whose beauty shamed the sun

¹⁸² As interesting is the question of how and why the Babylonian rabbis thought of the imperial gaze in the ways that they did. Were they thinking of the Roman empire, or did this stand in for the Persian imperium? If the former, how did the greater distance from Rome affect their relationship to its imperialism?

¹⁸³ See the later parallel in *Targum ad Lamentations* 4:2.

¹⁸⁴ *B. Sanhedrin* 39b. Compare the reverse scenario of Joseph seeing his father's image and cooling his passions in *y. Horayot* 2:4, 36d (*b. Sotah* 36b).

¹⁸⁵ The overlaps between *b. Gittin* 58a and *Bundahisn* 14b are particularly salient not only for their use of visual reproduction but also for their ethnogenetic motifs (of Africans as demonic, and of Romans as Jewish).

(*megannin et haḥammah beyofjan*). The Chaldean women would look (*ro'ot*) at them and emit [vaginal] fluid. They told their husbands, who told the king, who ordered they [the youths] be killed; but they still emitted fluid. The king ordered that they [the youths] be crushed.¹⁸⁶

The model of beauty here is linked not only to radiance but also to youth, highlighting the vulnerability of these young men under the imperial gaze.¹⁸⁷ The youths here are described in a similar manner to the Jewish men in *b. Gittin* 58a; here, the boys' beauty shames the sun, whereas there, they shame gold.¹⁸⁸ Beauty strikes the eye in a physicalized fashion, akin to light and radiance. In this case, the beauty of these male youths inflames their female observers to the point of sexual arousal, which persists beyond their death. The king must trample them beyond recognition to stop the flow of desire elicited by their sight. Here, the rapacious imperial gaze is attributed to women, who melt with passion. Jewish male beauty upsets the local, imperial, masculine sense of pride and proprietary interest. The beauty of the boys must be physically crushed in order for it to release its hold over the Chaldean women.¹⁸⁹ The impotence of the Chaldean men is ironically signaled by their recourse to murderous violence as the only solution to "controlling" their wives again. Like *b. Gittin* 58a, the colonized visual objects here exert a certain kind of power over empire. In both of these narratives, *b. Gittin* 58a and *b. Sanhedrin* 92b, Jewish men are dominated, exploited, and visually objectified, yet they subvert and resist a straightforward account of imperial domination. Even if these men do not fare well, when we compare their fates to the explicit violence and humiliation that the storyteller in *b. Gittin* 58a imagines for women, we find that even if the rabbis concede that a man's gender can be unsettled

¹⁸⁶ *B. Sanhedrin* 92b.

¹⁸⁷ See *Genesis Rabbah* 84:7 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:1008); *Genesis Rabbah* 87:3 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:1063). See also Bartman, "Eros's flame," 249, on "sexy boys" and what I would call their "age-queerness," a feature we will see highlighted in R. Yohanan, a "descendant of Joseph," in *b. Bava Metsi'a* 84a. On a crisis of Roman masculinity that led to the formation of a gender-ambiguous Christian masculinity, see Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch*.

¹⁸⁸ The problem of viewing God is compared to the problem of looking at the sun. Adam's heel is compared to the sun for its radiance in *Leviticus Rabbah* 20:2 (ed. Margaliot, 1:446); *b. Bava Batra* 8a. Apocalyptic, pseudepigraphic, and *Hekhalot* literature refer to angels and divine beings in terms of their luminosity. Wisdom, too, is supposed to be expressed visibly as light, and we will touch on this motif in Chapter 6, "Seeing sages." Ancients, Aristotle among many others, understood vision to be a process enabled by the transmission of light. Radiance was not only a common way to describe beauty but it was also a way to understand vision itself. See n. 223 below.

¹⁸⁹ Compare the spectacular and sexualized undoing of Christian women in martyrologies. See Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women*, 21–24; Burrus, *Sex Lives of Saints*. Brock and Harvey note that sexual mutilation happens to women but not men. Here, albeit in a less drawn out fashion, spectacularly beautiful men have their beauty violently, and equally spectacularly, erased.

by domination, a far more graphic and abject outcome can be imagined for a woman.¹⁹⁰

In this subsection, we have treated narratives of imperial visual exploitation. While such stories about men and women appear in both Palestinian and Babylonian collections, it is only in the Babylonian Talmud that we find a fully developed sexualization of Israelite or Jewish “beautiful” men, along with a somewhat subversive effect on the imperial-colonized power dynamic.¹⁹¹ The Bavli’s vignettes consider both Roman and Babylonian eyes (it seems feasible to read Nebuchadnezzar as a figure for either imperium). Rabbinic ambivalence about gentile eyes fetishizing Jewish men is found in Palestinian and Babylonian sources, as we have seen, particularly centering on the biblical figure of Joseph. However, these latter sources are more explicitly about the imperial gaze and do not depict Jewish male beauty as a questionable product of feminine self-cultivation (as with Joseph) or as seduction (as in some of the stories about women, and, to some degree, Joseph), but rather as something that potentially confounds imperial domination.¹⁹² This very confounding is related to the prominence of vision in these stories, which relates back to how the tactility of vision itself undermines a clean distinction between viewing subject and visual object.

Visual homoeros

In this subsection, we encounter a Jewish male and rabbinic visual object, one whose beauty employs some of the motifs we have seen in the rabbinic depiction of Joseph and other Israelite males under the imperial gaze, but who is, himself, the object of an ambivalent rabbinic erotic gaze. While this

¹⁹⁰ Thus, the rabbis tell of the violent sexual abasement of Tsafanat, so called “because all gazed (*tsafu*) at her beauty.” Thus, the rabbis tell of the violent sexual abasement of Tsafanat, so called “because all gazed (*tsafu*) at her beauty.” Of the stories in *b. Gittin* 58a, this story is far more developed in its detailing of sexual violence (though cf. *b. Sanhedrin* 92b). On the graphic violence against women martyrs compared with its relatively rare appearance against men, see Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women*, 25. See the postcolonial feminist reading of violence against women offered in Kim, “Uncovering her wickedness.”

¹⁹¹ For a different meditation on the misrecognizing gaze of empire, see *b. Ta’anit* 7a, where the emperor’s daughter is taught to understand why wisdom is stored in such an “ugly vessel” as R. Joshua b. Hanina. He informs her that beautiful scholars would know more if they were ugly.

¹⁹² Compare this self-aestheticization to Andrew Jacobs’ notion of the Christian “aestheticization” of Jews in Jacobs, *Remains*, 124–31. Also consider the versions of the story of Rabban Gamaliel’s encounter with the beautiful gentile woman in *y. ‘Avodah Zarah* and *b. ‘Avodah Zarah*. These versions specify that Rabban Gamaliel met the woman on the Temple Mount, enhancing the sense that what we are dealing with here, in part, is the gaze of the “colonized” turned back at the imperium (albeit very ambivalently). Consider, further, that the version of this story in *b. ‘Avodah Zarah* is followed by the story of R. Akiva’s reaction to the beauty of Tinnæus Rufus’ wife: he laughs because, in the future, she will convert and he will marry her.

is a particularly Babylonian rabbinic phenomenon, the rabbi in question, R. Yoḥanan, also figures as a visual object in the Palestinian sources:

When R. Yoḥanan died, the icons bent over; they said it was because there was no icon like him.¹⁹³

We have seen tales, in both Palestinian and Babylonian sources, in which Jewish beauty is devastated by the imperial gaze; here, we find a startling reversal: R. Yoḥanan's looks actually topple icons of imperial domination, and with them, a certain kind of masculinity.¹⁹⁴ R. Yoḥanan's beauty receives a fuller treatment in the Babylonian Talmud, in which it not only elicits strong responses – of admiration, desire, and ambivalence – but also upsets gender.

The *locus classicus* for the effects of R. Yoḥanan's beauty is *b. Bava Metsi'a* 84a–b. Scholars have read this multivalent narrative for, among other things, what it has to say about Babylonian attitudes toward Palestinian rabbis and its ample treatment of gender, sexuality, and rabbinic scholasticism, whether in relation to Greco-Roman notions of gender, masculinity, and homoeroticism or in terms of erotic transference and the life of study.¹⁹⁵ To these rich readings of this pericope, I bring the added perspective of visuality. I suggest that vision and, more specifically, visual eros, is a prominent trope that runs through the narratives and allows us to read and contextualize this story in new ways. Here is the narrative:¹⁹⁶

- (i) (a) R. Yoḥanan said: “R. Yishma’el son of R. Yose’s penis was like a bottle of nine *qav* [capacity].” Rav Papa said: “R. Yoḥanan’s penis was like a bottle of five *qav*”; others say, three *kav*. That of R. Papa himself was as [large as] the jugs of Harpania.
- (b) R. Yoḥanan said: “I am the [last] remnant of Jerusalem’s men of outstanding beauty.”
- (c) Let one who desires to see R. Yoḥanan’s beauty take a silver cup as it emerges from the crucible, fill it with the seeds of a red pomegranate, encircle its brim with a wreath of red roses, and set it between the sun and the shade. Its lustrous glow is akin to R. Yoḥanan’s beauty.
- (d) But that is not so! For did not a master say: “Rav Kahana’s beauty was akin to R. Abbahu’s; R. Abbahu’s beauty was akin to Jacob our ancestor’s; and our ancestor Jacob’s beauty was akin to Adam’s.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ *Y. Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42c (partial parallel in *b. Mo’ed Qatan* 25b).

¹⁹⁴ This hagiographic vignette comes amidst a series of other rabbinic deaths that result in symbols of Roman power being adversely affected.

¹⁹⁵ Kalmin, *Sage*, 1–5; Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 212–19, and, recently, Boyarin, “Rabbi Yoḥanan,” 52–67 and 178–84; Fraenkel, *Studies*, 73–77.

¹⁹⁶ Following Ms. Hamburg unless otherwise noted.

¹⁹⁷ See parallel in *b. Bava Batra* 58a, which concludes: “And Adam’s beauty was akin to God’s.”

And R. Yoḥanan is not mentioned! R. Yoḥanan is different [and thus not included here], because he lacked splendor of face [i.e. a beard].

- (2) (a) R. Yoḥanan used to go and sit at the gates of the *miqve* [ritual bath]. He said, “When the daughters of Israel ascend from ritual immersion they will look (*mistakkelin*) at me, that they may bear sons as beautiful and as learned in Torah as I am.”
- (b) The rabbis said to him: “Do you not fear the evil eye?”
He replied, “I come from the seed of Joseph our patriarch, over whom the evil eye does not rule, of whom it is written, ‘Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring’” (Genesis 49:22).¹⁹⁸
R. Abbahu said [of this verse]: “Do not read, ‘By a spring (*‘ale ‘ayin*)’ but, ‘Beyond the power of the eye (*‘ole ‘ayin*).’”
R. Yose b. R. Ḥanina deduced it from the following: “‘Let them multiply abundantly (*veyiddegu larov*) in the midst of the earth’ (Genesis 48:16) – just as fish in the seas (*dagim shebayam*) are covered by water and the eye has no power over them; so also are the seed of Joseph – the eye has no power over them.”
- (3) (a) One day R. Yoḥanan was bathing in the Jordan.
- (b) Resh Laqish saw him and thought he was a woman, and he stuck his lance in the Jordan and jumped to the other side.¹⁹⁹
- (c) When R. Yoḥanan saw Resh Laqish, he said to him, “Your strength for the Torah.”
- (d) He [Resh Laqish] said, “Your beauty of (or, for) women.”
- (e) He [R. Yoḥanan] said, “If you repent, I will give you my sister, who is more beautiful than I [am].”²⁰⁰
- (f) He [Resh Laqish] consented. He sought to return and collect his things, but he could not.
- (g) He [R. Yoḥanan] taught him Bible and Mishnah and made him into a great man.

One can divide this passage into three narrative segments (as enumerated). The first is a comparative account of rabbinic masculinity and beauty, from which R. Yoḥanan emerges in a (relatively) feminine light. The second depicts R. Yoḥanan’s self-presentation to women at the *miqve* and treats the dangers posed to the beautiful by the evil eye. The third follows R. Yoḥanan from *miqve* to river and his initial encounter with Resh Laqish. As a whole, this narrative set brings together many of the themes we have

¹⁹⁸ See parallel in *b. Berakhot* 20a. See also *Targum Yerushalmi*’s on this verse.

¹⁹⁹ Munich, Vatican, and Florence have variations of “he resembled a woman (*idme ke’ittetah*).” Note the similar form in the narratives in *b. Qiddushin* 81a in which Satan appears as a woman (*idme leh satan ke’ittetah*) tempting rabbis, in one case, across a river.

²⁰⁰ See *b. ‘Avodah Zarah* 18a, where Beruriah’s sister tries to excuse herself from sex work with Rabbi Me’ir by claiming that she is menstruating and that, “there are many here who are far more beautiful than I.”

encountered so far: a treatment of gender in terms of genitalia and other physical markers (1a; 3b; 3d); Joseph's beauty (2b) and its visually seductive (2a; 3a–d) and gender-troubling effects (1d; 3a–d); visual eugenics (2a); and the subversion of expected power and gender dynamics, including a potentially exploitative visual homoerotics (3a–g).

The Babylonian Talmud introduces R. Yoḥanan amidst its comparison of rabbinic genitalia (1a), according to which he falls shortest (with the still not inconsiderable five, or three, *qav*).²⁰¹ This reduction of maleness and masculinity to visible sex or genital anatomy is something we saw earlier with respect to 'ervah and the recitation of the Shema. Furthermore, a forensic rabbinic gaze scrutinizes bodies for visible signs (*simmanim*) – genitalia, hair (facial and pubic), and, for women, breasts – in order to determine sex.²⁰² However, the storyteller here is at pains to upset an easy reduction of gender to sex. R. Yoḥanan's looks are troubling for he has no "facial glory," no beard.²⁰³ The inability to produce hair on the face throws into doubt his ability to produce pubic hair, a determining factor in the legal status of manhood.²⁰⁴ This visible challenge to gender is expressed quite clearly when (in 3b) Resh Laqish sees him and thinks he is a woman (as per Hamburg), or (as per other mss.) R. Yoḥanan appears to him as a woman, and also by the symbolism of pomegranates, cups, and roses in the *ekphrasis* of R. Yoḥanan's beauty (1c).²⁰⁵

In light of all this, it is also no coincidence that R. Yoḥanan casts himself as a descendant of Joseph, with whom rabbinic tradition also associates feminine beauty. Both R. Yoḥanan and Joseph are feminine men and feminize themselves partly by making themselves into visual objects.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ One *qav* is a liquid measure of approximately two quarts. In absolute terms, this is considerable; in relative terms, and comparison is rather the point of this rabbinic exercise, R. Yoḥanan's three (or five) *qav*, versus seven or nine, is the least.

²⁰² See, e.g., *m. Niddah* 5:8–9; 6:1, 11. See *b. Niddah* 41b, where Resh Laqish defines the "outer house" (*bayit ḥabison*) of the genitalia as "all that is seen when a little girl sits." On this attempt to asexualize while visualizing the forbidden sight of female genitalia, see Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 54–55.

²⁰³ On beardless men, eunuchs, and boys being banned from monasteries, see Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Euthymii* 16, 31; *Vita Sabae* 7, 29, 69; *Vita Kyriaki* 4. For the view that the ban is related to antipathy toward women, see Harvey, *Asceticism*, 139. Such a ban could possibly relate to gender ambiguity in men. On Sassanian beardlessness see Lerner, "Eunuch."

²⁰⁴ See *m. Niddah* 6:11, which talks in terms of "lower and upper hair." See *t. Yevamot* 10.6.

²⁰⁵ See the play on gender, appearance, and scholarship in a midrash attributed to R. Berakhiah which takes Proverbs 8:4 to apply to "disciples of sages who appear (*domin*) like women but who act mightily (*osin ge'vurah*) like men" (*b. Yoma* 71a).

²⁰⁶ They are both self-aware of their beauty: Not only is R. Yoḥanan self-aware (1) but he also sets himself up, albeit more deliberately, to be gazed at (2). Similar to Joseph, R. Yoḥanan does not look at women, and he even refuses to look at his own sister when she entreats him to heal her husband Resh Laqish (see n. 221). However, he does see Resh Laqish's strength.

Despite the non-trivial absolute measure of R. Yoḥanan's genitalia, gender in this pericope is decidedly not reduced to anatomical sex. The pericope differentiates between maleness and masculinity, or, in other words, sex and gender. The warrior-like figure of Resh Laqish confirms this: His masculine gaze and manhood turn out to be ineffectual.²⁰⁷

The contrast of masculine and feminine beauty is reinforced in the exchange of looks between Resh Laqish and R. Yoḥanan (recalling Proverbs 31:3, "Do not give your strength to women *-al titten lanashim ḥelekha*").

Resh Laqish saw him and thought he was a woman, and he stuck his lance in the Jordan and jumped to the other side. When R. Yoḥanan saw Resh Laqish, he said to him, "Your strength for the Torah." He [Resh Laqish] said, "Your beauty of (or, for) women."²⁰⁸

The text describes a visual exchange: Resh Laqish *sees* R. Yoḥanan as a woman and his beauty as feminine, while R. Yoḥanan *sees* Resh Laqish's mighty lance, his "strength."²⁰⁹ Here is a story in which the visual object (R. Yoḥanan) looks back, openly assessing its viewer and challenging what might be the expected order of things.

In the expected order of things in classical Greco-Roman and Persian homoerotic economies of gender and power, the beardless, feminine rabbi would be vanquished by the masculine bearer of weapons.²¹⁰ However, the mutual visual exchange between the two announces a different, perhaps sublimated transaction, in which Torah study and a beautiful female double (R. Yoḥanan's sister) become transferential objects of desire. As initial visual object, R. Yoḥanan returns the gaze; the literary crafting suggests that he

²⁰⁷ See Boyarin's reading of Resh Laqish's spear as a phallus, which later loses its virility when he cannot retrieve it; Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 212–19. Resh Laqish's masculinity is not completely quelled; it surfaces during the final episode, in which he and R. Yoḥanan have a fiery disagreement about the purity of weaponry.

²⁰⁸ Resh Laqish's inability to retrieve his lance echoes the story that follows in *b. Bava Metzi'a* 84b about the patriarch Rabbi's marriage proposal to R. Eli'ezer b. Shim'on's widow, to which she replies: "Shall a vessel (*keli*) that has been used by holy (*qodesh*) be used by the profane (*hol*)? There, [in Palestine] they say, 'In the place that the master of the house has hung up his weapons (*zeneb*), there the shepherd hung up his wallet.'" Recall that R. Yoḥanan is compared to a cup. Vessel (*keli*), cup, and scabbard were vaginal terms in antiquity (see *t. Sotah* 5:9; *Mekhilta Derabbi Shim'on bar Yohai* to Exodus 20:13 [ed. Epstein-Melamed, 153]), whereas bow, lance, and weapons were either metaphors or designations for phalluses.

²⁰⁹ This is not quite a reciprocal or homovisual encounter, given that each objectifies the other (lance/woman).

²¹⁰ See Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 215–17. The poetry of Abu Nuwas (eighth century CE; born in Iran, died in Baghdad; wrote in Arabic) extols the virtues of androgynous beauties, particularly beardless young boys (*ghilman*). See Sharma and Hilsdon, "Love: pre-modern discourses," 237–38, on gazing, love, and eros in heteroerotic and homoerotic contexts in Persian poetry and novels, and Sprachman, "*Le beau garçon*"; Rowson, "Categorization of gender."

looks at Resh Laqish's lance or "might." Even more than this, in the exchange that follows he also succeeds in sapping Resh Laqish of his manly power and rebuilding him into a "great man" on his own terms, those of Torah.²¹¹ Put differently, not only does R. Yoḥanan escape Resh Laqish's rapacious gaze, but the feminine rabbi actually appears to topple, or at least top, the masculine bandit, and, as Daniel Boyarin has argued, (re)produce him (as he tried to do with women, by other means, outside the *miqve*) as a rabbinic scholar.²¹²

Aside from this relatively unusual, and likely late, Babylonian narrative instance of reciprocal gazing between two male (but not masculine) figures, other gazes redound in this passage, including the gazes of the women at the *miqve*, the evil eye, and the gaze of the storyteller himself.²¹³ R. Yoḥanan skirts the edge of the permissible by courting the female gaze (adulterously), albeit in the name of scholarly and aesthetic reproduction.²¹⁴ Through his visibility and the desire that it excites, he inserts himself quite purposefully into conjugal beds, reproducing his image using the ancient visual reproductive technologies discussed above.²¹⁵ The storyteller expresses unease through the device of the back-and-forth between R. Yoḥanan and other rabbis about the evil eye, which, as scholars have noted, redeploys Palestinian midrashic traditions.²¹⁶ Specifically the excerpt of Genesis 49:22, "Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring," is read to mean that the evil eye has no power over the descendants of Joseph. Palestinian midrash explicitly links this to the continuation of the

²¹¹ As per n. 206, R. Yoḥanan embodies the refusal to look at women, even as he deliberately courts their gaze in what seems to be an adulterous intrusion into marital intercourse. This is a different female gaze from the adulterous gentile or the prostitute. It is a gaze precisely in the context of ritual piety. He also refuses to look at his sister when she asks him to look at her and her children, who will suffer if he allows Resh Laqish to die (see n. 221). The language, "She is more beautiful than me," echoes that used by the daughter of R. Ḥanina b. Teradyon when she seeks to protect her virtue in the brothel (*b. 'Avodah Zarah* 18a).

²¹² Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 215–16. Here is the homovisual effect at work: the two exchange looks, and one becomes a reflection of the other. Strikingly, the third-century Indian *Vaikhānasa-Grhyasūtra* 3:9 proposes that "a woman who has bathed after menstruation will have such offspring as the man is whom she looks at" (cited and trans. in Gonda, *Vedic Ritual*, 75).

²¹³ See Rubenstein, *Culture*, 58; Friedman, "Historical aggadah." Friedman, Sperber, and Schremer note the relationship between this narrative and *b. Bava Qamma* 117a–b. See Friedman, "Further adventures"; Sperber, "Unfortunate adventures"; Schremer, "He posed him a difficulty."

²¹⁴ As noted, Palestinian sources and *b. Nedārim* 20a seem to imply that an adulterous gaze of this sort might impact the legitimacy of ensuing progeny.

²¹⁵ In this case, the effect is mimetic and homovisual (boys as beautiful and scholarly as R. Yoḥanan), even if the women's eyes, through which it is channeled, are not.

²¹⁶ *Genesis Rabbah* 97:3 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 111:1246) has Joshua inquire of the children of Joseph, "Are you not fearful of the [evil] eye?" Their reply invokes Genesis 48:16, "Let them multiply abundantly (*vayiddegu larov*) [like fish in the sea]," the blessing Jacob gave to the descendants of Joseph, as the source of their protection, i.e. that the "eye has no power over them."

verse, “The branches [or, daughters] step [or, look] over a wall,” which it rereads as “the Egyptian women, daughters of kings, wished to gaze at Joseph’s face, but he would not set his eyes upon any of them.”²¹⁷

This relationship between “Josephan” immunity from the evil eye and a refusal to look at women is made explicit in a Talmudic parallel (*b. Berakhot* 20a) to part of this pericope (2a–b).²¹⁸ At least two important additional features make this clear. First, the parallel adds the following to the midrashic explanations that follow R. Yoḥanan’s invocation of Joseph’s protection from the evil eye, “The eye that did not wish to feast upon that which did not belong to it [i.e. to Joseph, referring to the Egyptian women, cited above], the evil eye does not rule over it.”²¹⁹ Secondly, *b. Berakhot* 20a contrasts R. Yoḥanan with another rabbi, Rav Gidol, who frequented the *mique* in order to instruct women about proper immersion, but who did look at them. He, too, is questioned by the rabbis, but he is asked whether he does not fear the evil inclination, rather than the evil eye. In this literary context, it seems that both rabbis were right near the bath itself, one looking and the other appearing but refraining from looking.²²⁰ R. Yoḥanan is protected from the ostentatious display of his beauty, which would normally be a cause for concern, because of his merit in not engaging in a mutual gaze.²²¹ There is no ocular interchange and thus he, like Joseph (and like the Jewish men subjugated by Rome), can trigger visual eros (relatively) blamelessly.²²²

The ambivalence of the storyteller about this technically correct yet questionable behavior is apparent in the swift comeuppance that follows the midrashic justification. No sooner do we hear that Joseph’s “descendants” are immune from the evil eye, than the narrative shifts to Resh Laqish looking at R. Yoḥanan in the waters of the Jordan river (3), the very waters that supposedly protect Joseph’s descendants; R. Yoḥanan’s immunity is

²¹⁷ *Genesis Rabbah* 97:4 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1224) and see *Targum Yerushalmi* s.v. Genesis 49:22: “And when [the Egyptian sages] praised you, the daughters of the rulers [of Egypt] would walk along the walls and cast down in front of you bracelets and golden ornaments so that you might look at them.”

²¹⁸ See n. 221 below. Joseph’s immunity to the evil eye is rooted in a midrashic reading of Genesis 48:16 (Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 213; Kugel, *In Potiphar’s House*, 85–93) but appears in various narrative exegeses.

²¹⁹ *B. Berakhot* 20a (paralleled in *b. Zevahim* 118b).

²²⁰ *B. Berakhot* 20a. Rav Gidol claims that his evil inclination is not aroused; that these women look like so many white geese to him.

²²¹ In *Bava Metzi’a* the contrast between R. Yoḥanan’s willingness to look at Resh Laqish and his refusal to look at women is starkly drawn in the later request of his sister to look at her and her children (Mss. Hamburg and Florence) – a request that he ignores.

²²² Cf. y. *Avodah Zarah* 1:8, 40a–b, which contrasts Rabban Gamliel’s blessing over a beautiful animal with the utterance of “*abaskanta*.”

thereby challenged. This ironic editorial juxtaposition and those that follow bring us to the gaze of the storyteller himself.

We can trace the storyteller's gaze by observing his heavy hand. R. Yoḥanan's self-proclamation of beauty (2b) is evoked by the anonymous narrative voice by means of a recipe by which to elicit comparable radiance (2c). It then undermines this astonishing beauty by questioning whether R. Yoḥanan really belongs among the most beautiful male (rabbinic) specimens (2d), concluding that R. Yoḥanan, indeed, does not possess this visible, masculine beauty because he lacks a beard (2d), referring back to R. Yoḥanan's relative lack of masculinity (1a). The storyteller's delight is evident in his invitation for the reader to "see R. Yoḥanan's beauty" via a vivid instructional *ekphrasis* that radiates with silver, red, and golden hues. This is no realist portrait, however. The motifs invoked in this non-representational description focus on the physical properties of color and light that R. Yoḥanan emits, rather than on the contours of his features.²²³ The motifs are also recognizably feminine – cup, roses, and pomegranate seeds.²²⁴ This vivid image that the storyteller encourages us "to see" is a crucial manifestation of his own idolizing gaze at his protagonist.

The question and answers that follow (2d) make explicit what is already implied (1a): that compared to paradigmatic Jewish males, R. Yoḥanan in decidedly feminine. The succession of masculine beauties runs from a Babylonian-born Amora to a Palestinian Amora, through to biblical Jacob and Adam, and ultimately to God, in whose image Adam was created.²²⁵ R. Yoḥanan is presented by the Babylonian storyteller as a rabbinic figure who subverts the normative, rabbinic, gendered regime of visual eros, partly

²²³ See *b. Berakhot* 5b's description of R. Yoḥanan's beauty as radiance ("ziharurey") emitted from his exposed skin, which lights up the room. Both Yoḥanan and Ele'azar weep for its mortality. For the same act of revealing the arm and casting light ("nafal nehora") as an incitement to desire, see *b. Ketubot* 65a. Zoroastrian sources emphasize a particular quality of radiance (*xwarrah*) as an aspect of a deity, king, or priest's glory. See Soudavar, "Significance"; Gnoli, "Farr(ah)," 312–19. Compare the genealogy of *š-p-r* in *b. Bava Mets'a* 84a that goes all the way back to God to the Naqsh-e Rostam inscriptions in which Sassanian monarchs are said to have inherited their "face/appearance (*šhr*)" from the gods (see Chapter 3, p. 106). Relatedly, on the light and *xwarrah* created by Ohrmazd, and attributed to Iranians, priests, and Ohrmazd himself, see *Bundahišn* 26.1–6 (ed. and trans. Anklesaria, 210–11); Kreyenbroek, "Cosmogony"; *Bundahišn* 3:3 (ed. and trans. Anklesaria, 36–37; cf. trans. Zaehner, *Zurvan*, 333). On *xwarrah* as produced by Ohrmazd, see *DkM*. 347.1–22 (text and trans. in Zaehner, *Zurvan*, 369–71).

²²⁴ *B. Sotah* 36b describes the biblical Joseph as having a rose-colored face; this could refer to skin color or radiance. See Asclepiades, who talks of dark skin or coals shining as bright as roses (Asclepiades 5). On roses as feminine imagery, see Irwin, "Roses." On the rose as a symbol of beauty in Persian literature, see Diba, "Gol o bolbol." In Ben Sira 50:8, the high priest is compared to a rose in springtime. On a pomegranate-colored complexion as a mark of feminine beauty, see *Khusrow and his page*, 96 (*Pahlavi Text*, ed. Unvala, 35).

²²⁵ See Friedman, "Anthropomorphism."

by eliciting desire on the part of all who see him: the women at the *mique*, Resh Laqish, and the storyteller himself.

At this point in his biography, Resh Laqish is a useful figure: not yet a rabbinic insider, nor exactly an outsider (he is Jewish and conventionally gendered, more like the illustrious rabbis and biblical figures listed in 2d). He is close enough for the rabbinic storyteller to express a certain homoerotic desire while being sufficiently “other” or distant to displace it. And yet, the (ultimately uneasy) incorporation of Resh Laqish into rabbinic scholasticism “under the wings of the *shekhinah*,” or (arguably) the sublimation of desire thereby, does not quite resolve or dissolve the erotic tension.

The ambivalence of the storyteller toward his beautiful protagonist persists, as is evident from the plot twists that follow, including the denouement, in which Resh Laqish and R. Yoḥanan quarrel to fatal effect. Retribution occurs at the very end of the story: when Resh Laqish and R. Yoḥanan argue, Resh Laqish becomes ill and dies as a result of R. Yoḥanan’s anger, and R. Yoḥanan goes out of his mind from grief at the loss of his friend and dies, as well. We might ask whether the storyteller is punishing R. Yoḥanan for his flagrant exhibitionism, a trope familiar from Joseph and from other contexts involving seductive women; or, having ogled R. Yoḥanan’s beauty, through the figures of the women at the *mique*, Resh Laqish, and otherwise, is the storyteller enacting and then disciplining his own desire?²²⁶

It is true that the story idolizes, and perhaps exoticizes, R. Yoḥanan’s brand of radiant, feminine beauty, but it also annihilates him through a dramatic account of love and angry emotion between men. As we have seen, the feminizing effect of being a visual object desired by women is thought in terms of gender trouble and transgression or imperialism, in other words, in terms of a feminization that can carry homoerotic desire, and sometimes violence, in its tow.²²⁷ However, the deliberate deployment

²²⁶ While the male homoerotics of this narrative have been well explored, it is worth drawing attention to the possibility of homoerotic vision on the part of females, who do, after all, “gaze” at the rabbi. Indeed, the passage goes to much effort to convince us that R. Yoḥanan was ambiguously gendered, that he was a very feminine man who passed as a woman. This leaves various possibilities open as to what precisely those women whose eyes caught him and brought his vision home to bed with them thought that they saw and desired, including the possibility that they, like Resh Laqish, saw him as a woman.

²²⁷ So too, *Genesis Rabbah* 86:3 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:1054–55) has Joseph as a slave who is desired not only by his adulterous Egyptian mistress, but also by his master, who is consequently castrated. *B. ‘Avodah Zarah* 20a, where Rabban Gamaliel’s pronouncement upon the beauty of the beautiful, female “idol-worshipper” articulates the same power dynamic in reverse. The story’s concern is not just about gazing at beautiful women but about appreciating gentile beauty; it follows a *baraita* and halakhic discussion about granting *hen* (favor, grace, or beauty) to gentiles.

of the many visual motifs we have identified – the female gaze, male resistance to looking at women, seductive hypervisibility, all culminating in a male–male gaze – in the context of rabbinic gender, reproduction, and scholasticism, makes for more than a tale of forbidden pleasure followed by punishment. What still remains, I would suggest, is a critique of rabbinic masculinity *and* visibility, from the inside and at its core.²²⁸

From human–divine to human–human visibility

In the previous chapters we suggested homovisual and heterovisual paradigms in order to analyze divine–human visibilities. The former was characterized as a reciprocal, mirroring mode of seeing in which two seeing subjects exchange a gaze in a mirroring fashion. In the case of *re'iyah*, it turned out that rabbinic halakhah and narrative promoted such a shared gaze between an idealized, able-bodied, male pilgrim and a divine equivalent. Heterovisuality, on the other hand, was characterized as a mode of looking which separates seeing subject and visual object. In the case of *re'iyah*, this could involve a pilgrim looking at cultic objects such as the *lehem hapanim*. In a more complex version, it could involve pilgrims being directed to look at a material representation of themselves engaged sexually with God, or (implicitly) at feminized manifestations of God (e.g. the poles of the ark, or “temple furniture” analogized to a married woman). Furthermore, gentile conquest and penetration into the holy of holies is depicted along the lines of an aggressive heterovisuality.

Homovisuality and heterovisuality can be usefully applied to rabbinic conceptions of visual eros, which inevitably but *not* exclusively focus on the male gaze. At times, it seems as if the rabbis elide heterovisuality with heterosexuality, at others it is clear that this is not the case. However, in both scenarios, the gendering of gazing and being seen does not necessarily fall along predictable lines. The rabbis seem to promote a refusal of homovisuality, and a restraint of heterovisuality. One could argue that this underpins a fundamental conception of normative heterovisuality, and even of heterosexuality, but, as I hope to have shown, rabbinic visual eros resists such easy categorization.

²²⁸ I hope to have brought another lens to the analysis of this rich Talmudic passage by drawing out how much work the eye does in channeling desire. In presenting this narrative of R. Yoḥanan, I do not mean to suggest that it stands for all rabbinic visibility, or for a consistent ambivalence about the homoerotic and homo-rabbinic gaze. Neither do I mean to imply that this gaze is only a later Babylonian phenomenon. In Chapter 6, we will see a visual eroticism in the Palestinian Talmud, which surfaces in the context of learning, but which has a rather different character.

Given the temporality of God gazing, i.e. the loss of divine–human viscosity, the substitutional logic of seeing sages and (not) seeing idols needs no special explanation. What, though, is the relationship between God gazing and visual eros? I suggest that the closest we come to answering this question is by taking seriously the inverse relationship that we find in Tannaitic and later sources between the sacred (whether conceived of as such, as the *shekhinah*, or as liturgical acts such as prayer or blessing) and *'ervah*. Put most explicitly in *Leviticus Rabbah*'s promise that one who “closes his eyes” to *'ervah* will receive the face of the *shekhinah*, is the juxtaposition of the restoration of divine–human homovisuality and self-denial of human–human heterovisuality.

Conclusion

In these pages, we have traced a number of instances in which the Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis treated the erotic gaze. We began by looking at how the gaze was gendered when directed at genitalia and have ended with the scrutiny of rabbinic genitalia. Along the way, we have seen how readily the rabbis, like many ancients, understood vision to be capable of both arousing desire and transmitting lust. In other words, merely looking could produce desire. And, conversely, looking with desire was dangerous because vision, with its implicit connection to touch, was no casual form of contact. The effects of desirous looking could range from adultery to visually imprinting the fetus.²²⁹ Its suppression, on the other hand, could shape and have unintended consequences on the dynamics of gender and subjectivity. In other words, the guiding of the erotic gaze served to temper and shape rabbinic masculinity and sexuality, and to direct men toward the sacred.

The rabbis engaged in considerations about sexuality through the sense of vision in significant ways, and these considerations of visual eros were complexly gendered. We have noted how the rabbis deployed contemporaneous modes of viscosity and ideas about gender, even as they sometimes did so in ostensible opposition to non-Jewish conceptions (by casting non-Jews as transgressive).²³⁰ Rabbinic gender and sexuality is articulated by a paradoxically prohibitive gaze or by a complicatedly seductive visibility of Jewish male (and rabbinic) eros. By constructing their own masculinity in terms of a restrained gaze, and by conceiving of themselves as erotic objects

²²⁹ Both of these concerns are present in Palestinian and Babylonian texts and sources.

²³⁰ This is not to suggest that there is a stable account of gender and sexuality in Greco-Roman and Persian cultures against which the rabbis staged their own conceptions of gender and sexuality.

of vision, the rabbis end up confounding a straightforward account of the male gaze or of masculinity. At the same time, prohibition itself is productive of the forbidden. Especially as visual restraint or abstinence, it serves to form an idealized, “holy” rabbinic subject.²³¹ We have examined the variety of ways in which the erotic gaze was gendered, legislated, and deployed by the rabbis, even, and especially, in the guise of prohibition. Scholars of religion, law and legal theory, and psychoanalysis debate the cultural, social, and psychological effects of prohibition or self-denial. The case of rabbinic prohibitive visuality, despite our ignorance about praxis, offers a complex construction of prohibition that goes beyond an understanding of its function as either repression or inverse enactment of desire.

Both those who challenged the rabbinic ideal and those who embodied it were objects of rabbinic fascination. We can recognize in the rabbis something similar to what we find in the late-antique writers of Christian hagiographies: a fascination for those who pushed the boundaries of gender, vision, and eros, for those who dived into extreme asceticism or those who transgressed. Both cases reveal how the gendering of vision, when inflected with eros or when agitated against it, was mutable. At some point, the logic of the gaze could fold in on itself, demanding withdrawal from the field of vision, and this itself could have potentially subversive effects on standard dynamics of gender. Relinquishing the gaze could easily turn one into a visual object; the rabbi or the Jewish male could easily become a thing of beauty eliciting a homoerotic gaze, particularly and most explicitly, in Babylonian sources. We glimpse such a homoerotic gaze in the eyes of the gentile, masculine other who wishes to dominate, and in the complex and sublimated visual eros among rabbis themselves. However, the effects of imperial visual domination are not straightforward in these stories and open up spaces of resistance on the part of their beautiful protagonists. In short, the rabbis were caught between the dangers (and pleasures) of looking and the very different, but equally tantalizing, dangerous pleasure of being seen; the exploration of these dangers had marked effects on their desire, their sense of desirability, and even their gender.

²³¹ On the differences between the Bavli and Yerushalmi in this regard see below pp. 139–41. Of the sources treated in this chapter *b. Avodah Zarah* 20b has relatively little editorial dialectic, a mix of *baraitot* and chiefly Babylonian *memrot* (first to fifth gen.); *b. Berakhot* 24a has some editorial language and mostly second- to third-century *memrot*; *b. Nedarim* 20a–b has a thin editorial layer but signs of an editorial hand in juxtaposing a diverse array of Palestinian and Babylonian sources; the nested story in *b. Pesahim* 113b bear the marks of Babylonian Amoraic or later authorship; *b. Bava Metsi'a* 84a contains Palestinian Amoraic traditions along with a significant editorial layer.

CHAPTER FIVE

Eyeing idols

[T]he streets, the market, the baths, the taverns, even our houses are none of them altogether clear of idols. The whole world is filled with Satan and his angels.¹

Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 8.9

We are told that Paul, while walking through Athens, was “provoked in spirit” when he “saw the city was full of gods (*kateidōlon*).”² Through Paul’s emotional eyes we have a glimpse of how people in the late-antique Mediterranean liked to *see* their gods. One way in which to do this was to render them in material form: in statues, in paintings, in mosaics, in temples, on street-altars, on vessels, in bathhouses, over gateways, and above entrances – that is, in images.³ However, the notion that sight was a fundamental means by which to access the divine did not necessarily lead to a theology of physical images. Philo, another first-century Jew, makes it very clear that the eyes, while crucial to the discovery of and journey toward divinity, must reach beyond the material realm to acquire true vision.⁴ Like Paul, and in equally strong terms, Philo repudiated idolatry and the material representation of the divine.

While the Jewish critique and rebuke of certain divine images was hardly new to Paul or Philo, what begins to surface in their writings, and gains currency in the writings of later Jews and Christians, is a more specific concern about *looking* at idols. I will argue that this concern was triggered by a twofold problem. One aspect of the problem was the broad sensitivity toward the dangers of sight itself that we have already outlined. From this perspective, “idols” or *avodah zarah* (lit. strange worship) were among a variety of potentially problematic objects that crowded the visual field of

¹ In Tertullian, *Disciplinary*, trans. Arbesmann et al., 69. ² Acts 17:16.

³ By images, I mean material objects such as statues, paintings, frescoes, mosaics, reliefs, etc.

⁴ Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* 3.34–35; *De Migratione Abrahami* 29; *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* 19. On ancient visual theories, including Philo’s, see Marcus, “Note on Markan optics.”

the late-antique person. The rabbis navigated this visual field by attempting to shape various viewing strategies that shielded the viewer from an idol's harm or, more daringly, that neutralized or negated the object itself. The other part of the problem with idols pertained to the viewing of sacred images per se. I argue that rabbinic ways of viewing (or not viewing) idols were informed by a sensitivity to contemporaneous modes of "mystical viewing."

As already discussed, the so-called Jewish problem with images was not about images in general but about those images designated as "idols."⁵ Scholars have shown us how this very designation was strategic and pragmatic.⁶ Our interest in the pages that follow concerns how rabbis saw idols, especially given their embeddedness in a visual culture that paid great heed to the impact of visual object upon viewer, and vice versa. In this respect, idols, like women, were considered to be troubling visual objects.⁷ Explicit linkages of this nature are found in the Bible, particularly in the prophetic books, which equate idol-worship and sexual promiscuity.⁸ So, too, did early Christian writers such as Clement link "idolatry and sexual error . . . through the error of the eye."⁹ David Michael Levin declares, "vision has a history and this history is one of both seeing and of making things to be seen."¹⁰ But when one lives in a world in which one cannot necessarily control the making of certain "things to be seen," what stories about vision can be told?¹¹ In the Roman, and later Christian, context of Palestine, rabbinic sources on *'avodah zarah* are especially valuable in allowing access to other, minority and local viewpoints and viewing practices with respect to material religion in the provinces. Art historians have shown us how texts can supply answers to at least some of our questions about images and viewing habits, questions on which images alone often remain silent.¹² Rabbinic texts in particular, in representing, legislating, and narrating the divine images of others, simultaneously enact a certain

⁵ Steven Fine articulates this most lucidly (Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 60–81).

⁶ Halbertal, "Coexisting"; Blidstein, "R. Yohanan"; Schwartz, "Aphrodite's bath." Fine shows the ideological and political stakes at play (Fine, *Art and Judaism*).

⁷ Combining the sensitivity to visual eros with the attraction of idols, Ezekiel's God declares, "I was crushed by their wanton heart that turned away from me, and their wanton eyes that turned after their idols" (Ezekiel 6:9).

⁸ Exodus 34:16; Leviticus 20:5, 6; Ezekiel 6:9, 16:15–17, 30–31, 20:30, 23:30; Hosea 1:2, 4:12–15.

⁹ Goldhill, "Erotic eye," 175. In *b. Berakhot* 61b, R. Yohanan states that it is better to be behind a lion than behind a woman, behind a woman than behind an idol, and behind an idol than behind a synagogue filled with people praying.

¹⁰ Kleinberg-Levin, *Modernity*, 129. ¹¹ Mitchell, "Showing seeing."

¹² See Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 21–22, on the differences between Lucian's description of the image of Hera and the relief found at Dura.

resistance to and attempted control of these images that was not possible in material terms.¹³ Here, the very partiality of these sources allows us to track a minority perspective on a broader visual culture and its material manifestations.

Rabbinic sources make divine images visible and viewing habits manifest, particularly as sites of conflict and resistance, through the concept and vocabulary of idolatry, or *'avodah zarah*, to which is devoted a mishnaic tractate as well as many discussions throughout rabbinic literature.¹⁴ So too did many early Christian writers address the problem of living in a "world full of idols." While the notion of idolatry was biblically based, one cannot underestimate the ways in which the rabbis, as well as the church fathers, granted it an especially vivid ongoing life and reinvention. Idols were not born; they were made. The rabbinic laws regarding idolatry clarify that an object's idolatrous nature was chiefly in the eye of its worshipper or rabbinic beholder; and it is precisely this eye that is our focus here.

Idolatrous objects, in particular among the panoply of visual objects, seem to elicit a particular kind of visual response and framing, not only from ancient rabbis, but also from modern scholars. Idols are troubling images, not just in the sense that women were, but also, as noted in the Introduction and Chapter 2, because of their peculiar role in the writing of Jewish history. The prohibition of idols, whether construed as worship or the construction of images of other gods or the Jewish god, has given Jews a reputation for iconoclasm, aniconism, and even antipathy toward the sense of vision itself. Conversely, idolatry has been represented as a particularly Jewish vice.¹⁵ The rhetorical figure of the sacrilegious, blind, or idolatrous Jew has yet to be utterly dislodged from our own historical lenses.¹⁶

The ancient rabbis are often seen to epitomize this supposed antipathy toward images and, by logically fallacious extension, vision more broadly. Others have already complicated the picture of the "artless Jew" and the

¹³ See Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 113.

¹⁴ How different images are determined to be idols is not the concern of this study. On this question, see Fine, *Art and Judaism*; Blidstein, "R. Yohanan"; Schwartz, "Aphrodite's bath"; Halbertal, "Coexisting." Fine distinguishes between aniconism and what he calls "anti-idolism." He develops the corrective terminology of "anti-idolic" to describe the specific ways in which Jews affirmed their own identities by negating the sacred images of others.

¹⁵ See Cohen, "Jews as killers of Christ," 8–10, 22.

¹⁶ See, e.g., John 9:40–41; 2 Corinthians 3:14–16; Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 67.8; Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos* 12–13; Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks*, 65–67; Cameron, "Language of images." On Augustine's comparison of Jewish literalism or blindness to their own texts with gentile idolaters, see Markus, *Signs and Meanings*, 25–27.

iconoclastic rabbi in late antiquity.¹⁷ In these pages we will see how even the most “extreme” forms of rabbinic disengagement with idols partook in the contemporary visual *koine* through which sacred images were viewed. Analytic terms like “attitudes” (as in, “rabbinic attitudes toward idols”), “acceptance,” or “rejection” do not quite get at the complexity of reappropriation at work in rabbinic modes of viewing idols, which were, after all, material manifestations of extrarabbinic culture that were conceived of *as such* (i.e. nonrabbinic, non-Jewish) by the rabbis.

At the risk of oversimplification, there are always two primary possibilities for vision: One can either look, or not look. The divide between looking at and looking away is especially potent when considering idolatrous objects; merely setting the eyes upon them has dangerous connotations. Rabbinic texts approach looking at idols in several ways. We can categorize these rabbinic viewing modes as: “halakhic forensics,” “looking away,” “looking awry,” and “liturgical looking.” “Halakhic forensics” refers to the wider realm of visual discernment through which the rabbis attempt to identify and categorize things in the world, for epistemic and evidentiary purposes. For example, the tractate *‘Avodah Zarah*, provides a rabbi’s-eye view of a world full of religious objects, images, statues, and gods. Whether deliberately or inadvertently, the rabbis attended to and recorded various details of the appearances of objects. However, the act of viewing in the case of this tractate is treated only implicitly, through description and presentation of graphic details of visual objects, but it is not addressed, described, or announced in and of itself.¹⁸

At first glance, the strategy of “looking away” may seem like a disengagement from contemporaneous material culture. We will see that it is very much attuned to the cultural importance of vision in approaching sacred images and, indeed, to the dangers posed by vision itself for the soul and body. By looking away, one might actually be affirming the power of the “idol,” granting it a certain grudging sanctity. This potential critique of the strategy of averting the gaze surfaces in the Palestinian Talmud.¹⁹ Another visual approach is to deliberately engage the image through the eyes in a way that negates reverential gazing and neutralizes the image’s power, what one might call “looking awry.” A related but perhaps more forceful

¹⁷ See Levine and Weiss (eds.), *From Dura to Sepphoris*; Fine, *Art and Judaism*; Bland, *Artless Jew*.

¹⁸ This is not always the case with halakhic forensics. Examples in which the forensic eye is explicitly thematized include: laws of *niddah*, witness testimony and evidence, observation of rabbis’ actions for halakhic determinations. Charlotte Fonrobert attends to vision in menstrual matters in *Menstrual Purity*, 16–17, 96, 154.

¹⁹ *Y. ‘Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42b–c.

alternative to “looking awry” is “liturgical looking,” a viewing practice in which the visual object is seen and ritually encoded with a curse.

In this chapter I concentrate on examples of “looking away” and “looking awry,” with a brief discussion of “liturgical looking.” I argue that all these viewing modes – even, or especially, “looking away” – were attuned to contemporaneous ideas about the physical and spiritual mechanics of vision, particularly as they pertained to sacred images. If late-antique vision is “a two-way street,” then these modes work by operating at different ends of that route.²⁰

Looking away

We begin by examining a Tannaitic source that attempts to explain the nature of the biblical prohibition of looking at idols in Leviticus 19:4:²¹

“Do not turn toward the idols” (Leviticus 19:4). Do not turn to worship them.

A. Do not turn to worship them.

B. R. Judah says, “Do not turn to *see* them literally (*lir’otan vada’y*).”²²

This Tannaitic source attempts to explain the biblical prohibition in Leviticus. The first interpretation reads “turn” (*p-n-y*) in the sense of turning toward in worship. R. Judah understands *p-n-y* in its literal sense (*vada’y*), thus reading the verse as a prohibition against the very *looking* at idols.

There are several ways to understand R. Judah’s intervention. It could be expanding the scope of the prohibition by enacting a precautionary measure, so that even actions short of worship, such as looking, are prohibited.²³ Another possibility is that R. Judah focuses on vision as something

²⁰ Miles, “Vision,” 128.

²¹ Leviticus 19:4 is a curious basis for a visual prohibition of idolatry. While the Pentateuch rarely talks of idolatry in such terms, other more obvious examples are Numbers 15:39 and Deuteronomy 4:19. Ezekiel tends to fulminate against idolatry in ocular terms, especially “raising the eyes,” e.g., Ezekiel 6:9; 14:4, 7; 18:6, 12, 15; 20:7, 24; 33:25. Another possible instance in which idolatry and vision are linked is Psalms 101:3. In general terms, this expression refers to an intentional “activation of the eye” rather than to a literal elevation of the gaze; see Reif, “A root to look up?” and references to earlier works cited therein. When referring to deities, raising the eyes denotes supplication, reverence, or worship (cf. Isaiah 40:26; Psalms 121:1, 123:1). More common terms related to idol-worship are “service,” “sacrifice,” and “prostration.” The majority of statements regarding idolatry constitute instructions to refrain from their construction, to desist from their worship, and to destroy them, e.g. Exodus 20:2–4, 23:13, 34:13–17; Numbers 33:52; Deuteronomy 5:6–8, 7:5, 25–26, 12:2–4; Judges 2:2; 2 Kings 11:18, 19:18.

²² *Sifra Qedoshim* 1 (ed. Weiss, 87a; paralleled in *t. Shabbat* 17:1).

²³ See Eli’ezer b. Samuel of Metz, *Sefer yere’im hashalem*, 351, who sees R. Judah as elaborating rather than contradicting the statement in A.

especially meaningfully related to idolatry. His interpretation may point to looking as part of what it means “to worship.” Before weighing in on these possibilities, let us unpack R. Judah’s apparently simple intervention.

As a hermeneutic term, *vada’y* indicates that the relevant interpretation follows the “plain meaning” of the biblical text, sometimes in contrast to a figurative reading.²⁴ Thus R. Judah’s reading is marked as consistent with the literal meaning of the *p-n-y/h*, so that the biblical injunction directly forbids looking at idols.²⁵ The root *p-n-y* commonly means “to turn,” in either a literal or figurative sense (as in A); in some contexts it can have the narrower meaning of “look” (as in B).²⁶

In this particular case to “turn” would conform to the “plain meaning” of the text as much as, if not more than, to “look.”²⁷ R. Judah’s ostensibly literal (and also hyper-physical) reading of the root is somewhat strained. All this is to say that explaining the content of his prohibition as an unremarkable hermeneutic reflex or standard rigorist precaution does not sufficiently account for the particularity of claiming that a ban on looking at idols plainly arises from the prohibition in Leviticus 19:4.²⁸

²⁴ On the term *vada’y* as plain meaning, see Halivni, *Peshat and Derash*, 17–18, 76–77, and 197 for references; Loewe, “Plain’ meaning.”

²⁵ If this is the case it is harder to argue that the *Sifra* presents R. Judah’s interpretation as a precautionary, *extra* measure.

²⁶ *P-n-y* in biblical Hebrew means “to face” or “to turn” in the Qal. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 815–17; Even-Shoshan, *Hamilton beḥadash* s.v. *p-n-h*. In some contexts, it can mean “to look” e.g. Exodus 2:12, 16:10; Numbers 12:10, 16:42; 2 Samuel 9:8; Ezekiel 36:9; Malachi 2:13; see Sadan, “Substitution.” However, in the local context of Leviticus 19:4, *p-n-y* is not being used in its visual sense. Leviticus 19:31 and 20:6 use *p-n-y* to warn against “turning to” mediums and soothsayers. These instances use the root *p-n-y* in the sense of “turn toward,” in a metaphorical or affective fashion, rather than in the literal sense of “facing” or “looking.” However, early rabbinic midrash did not necessarily concern itself with the larger contexts of meaning, preferring to treat smaller units of the biblical text – words, phrases, or verses. See Kugel, “Two introductions,” 146; Stern, “Midrash.”

²⁷ To my knowledge, the characterization of “looking” as the common or plain sense of the verb *p-n-y* is unusual in Tannaitic sources. The *Sifra* provides other interpretations of this verb, including “turning towards in worship” (as per above) and “clearing away” (in its sense of vacate). The Targums and the Peshitta on Leviticus 19:4 use the Aramaic cognate *p-n-y*, but the fourth-century CE Samaritan *Memar Markah* 3 has an emphatically visual reading, “And an image (*pesel*) or any likeness (*damah*) that is not proper, you shall not see. You shall not fill your eyes (*la temalle ‘enekha*) on an evil altar”; see *Tibat Marqe* (ed. Ben-Hayyim, 211). *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, *Targum Neofiti*, and fragments read Exodus 2:12 as *s-k-l*; *Onqelos* uses the Aramaic cognate *p-n-y*. All Targums use the Aramaic cognate in Exodus 16:10, and all but *Neofiti* marginalia read the cognate in Leviticus 20:6 (the *Neofiti* marginalia has *s-k-l*). *Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Neofiti* have *s-k-l* for Numbers 12:10; *Onqelos* and *Neofiti* have *q-b-l*, and *Pseudo-Jonathan*, *Neofiti* marginalia, Peshitta and Vulgate have *s-k-l* for Numbers 16:15; *Onqelos* uses *p-n-y*. *Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Neofiti* have *s-k-l* for Deuteronomy 9:27. In general, *Onqelos* prefers *p-n-y* for Hebrew *p-n-y*. Sokoloff gives “turn, remove, pour out, empty, release, complete” for *p-n-y* in Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Palestinian Aramaic*, 438.

²⁸ The reading is sufficiently an imposition onto the verse-phrase for us to seek explanations outside of rabbinic hermeneutic considerations alone.

The parallel in *t. Shabbat* 17:1 also suggests that R. Judah's interpretation is not a run-of-the-mill rabbinic stringency:

- (A) Writing that goes under figures (*tsurot*) or icons (*yokna'ot*), one does not look at it (*en mistakkelin bahen*).²⁹
- (B) And not only that, but even on weekdays one does not look at icons (*en mistakkelin beyokna'ot*), as it says, "Do not turn toward the idols" (Leviticus 19:4).³⁰

In this case, *looking* at legends underneath an image is forbidden on the Sabbath, on top of a general weekday prohibition not to look at the images themselves. There is no meta-hermeneutic gloss of *vada'y*, even as the Tosefta indicates the exegetical derivation by citing Leviticus. In this context, the purpose is to justify the ban on looking at idols rather than to interpret the biblical phrase. As such, the ban against looking assumes its own integrity here as an everyday baseline of acceptable behavior vis-à-vis idolatrous images. There is no sense in which it is presented as a precautionary ban designed to prevent one from "turning toward idols."³¹ In its language and its reference to legends beneath images, the Tosefta gestures more to contemporaneous Greco-Roman visual, sculptural, and inscriptional culture than to biblical hermeneutics.³²

²⁹ The prohibition of *looking* (*s-k-l*) at inscriptions under images is noteworthy. The more obvious verb is *reading* (*q-r-*), which literally means "cry out." This reflects the fact that in antiquity texts were usually read out loud. For the view that the prohibition against "looking" refers to reading, see Lieberman, *Tosefta kifshutah*, vol. II, 282, and references therein. When one considers the way *s-k-l* is used again in the second part of the sentence, this reinforces a visual understanding of the verb, i.e. looking. Looking even without the ability to read would have been enough in order to understand the content of inscriptions under sacred images, which usually contained dedications and, often, invocations of deities. As Lehmann puts it, "One did not have to read the inscription to know that it contributed to the Roman system of values" (Lehmann, "The city and the text," 388). Examples of "looking" at image-related inscriptions include Mark 12:13–17; Acts 17:23. Cf. *b. Shabbat* 149a, which substitutes "read" for "look," and *t. Shabbat* 13:16, which bans looking at a mirror (*ro'in bemar'ah*).

³⁰ *T. Shabbat* 17:1. The form, "Do not do X, and not only this, but do not do Y," appears repeatedly in tractate *Shabbat*, as does the form, "Do not do X on the Sabbath, and not only this, but do not even do X during the week"; e.g. *m. Shabbat* 6:10; *t. Shabbat* 7:23, 16:22. *T. Shabbat* 17:1 cannot be read (solely) in the context of bans on reading business documents, since the prohibition is against looking rather than reading. Moreover, those prohibitions against reading on the basis of inappropriateness for Sabbath tend to explicitly declare themselves as such, as do the precautionary prohibitions, e.g., *m. Shabbat* 1:3, 16:1; *t. Shabbat* 1:8. Compare the reading prohibition in *t. Shabbat* 17:8, as well as the restriction on consulting figures for calculation from certain sources "as one does during the week" in *t. Shabbat* 17:6. For additional reading prohibitions, see *m. Shabbat* 16:1; *t. Shabbat* 1:13, 13:1. For prohibitions against carrying or showing commercial documents, see *t. Shabbat* 8:11, 13.

³¹ There is no implicitly figurative interpretation or contrast with "turn to worship."

³² On the practice of placing inscriptions at the base of a statue see Henderson, *Pliny's Statue*, 33–36, 163–64. Inscriptions often contained dedications invoking the gods or honoring a person. Scholars

This brings us back to the possibility that R. Judah's ban on looking at idols may be a commentary on what it means "to turn to worship them."³³ I suggest that the prohibition against looking per se is best understood in the context of a world not only in which seeing is essential to the ritual experience of sacred images, but also in which seeing, in general, is a loaded experience. It is noteworthy that in the third century Hippolytus claimed that the first-century Essenes did not "carry, look at (*horān*) or make images (*eikona*)."³⁴ This possibility that looking itself was understood as part of the worship of idols seems to be further realized in later sources, as our Tannaitic tradition develops and is linked to a line of rabbinic reasoning that highlights the withholding of the gaze and its relationship to idolatry.

As we have seen, ancient Jews, among them the Tannaim, understood that looking at certain visual objects could have very real effects upon the beholder or the object.³⁵ Certainly, belief in the dangers of vision, exemplified in notions like the evil eye or the erotic power of sight, are already attested in early Roman Palestine and beyond.³⁶ If late-antique notions of vision underscored sight's sensitivity, then perhaps the important role this sense assumed in the realm of the sacred is unsurprising. As we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, and as many have argued, central to late-antique religion was the impulse to "see the gods," whether in person, sculpture or painting, dream or apparition.³⁷ We see this desire played out from

from Loewe, *Render unto Caesar*, 88, to Finney, *Invisible God*, 70–93, have noted the connection between Jesus and the coin (Mark 12:13–17; Matthew 22:15–22; Luke 20:20–26) and y. *Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42b; however, they have not noted the much closer temporal and terminological connections with t. *Shabbat* 17:1 (*eikon*, legend, closer in time).

³³ See *Sifre Numbers* 115 (ed. Horowitz, 126–27) to Numbers 15:39: "So that you do not follow your heart and your eyes, after which you used to go astray," which links the gaze with heresy, lust, and idolatry.

³⁴ Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium* 9.26.1–2.

³⁵ See *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma'el, Bahodesh* 2 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 210–11), 9 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 235); m. *Avot* 2:9, 11, 5:13, 19; m. *Zavim* 2:2 (visual arousal in general and upon seeing mating animals and women's clothes); t. *Hagigah* 2:3–4; t. *Nazir* 4:7; t. *Sotah* 1:7; m. *Sotah* 1:8; t. *Bava Metsi'a* 2:30 (paralleled at t. *Horayot* 2:5, "enlightening the eyes").

³⁶ The concept of the evil eye is founded in an extramissive theory of vision. See Turan, "Wherever the sages set their eyes"; Kalmin, "Evil eye." Unlike Turan, Kalmin believes that '*ayin hara*' in Tannaitic sources signifies stinginess and is not of the "magical" sort. For a discussion of Palestinian Jewish apotropaic mirror plaques, including a fifth-century example from Dikhrin, see Gregg, "Marking," 554–56, and references therein. For a discussion of the evil eye and visual theory in the early Roman empire, see Bartsch, *Mirror of the Self*, esp. 69–71.

³⁷ This sense of vision, even reciprocal vision, as a key mode of engaging with the gods or their sacred images is, of course, not an innovation peculiar to the early Byzantine period. James Francis sees the engagement with image and viewing as something that particularly effloresced in the first few centuries CE; see Francis, "Living icons," in which he brings examples from Plotinus to Pausanias and from Julian to Athanasius. See also Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 106–67. Arnobius, the third-century Christian apologist, distinguishes between seeing statues and actually seeing the gods in his

the Israelite Psalms, to ancient Greek sacred rituals, to a flurry of second- and third-century sources, including Lucian's *De Dea Syria*, and Pausanias' and Philostratus' descriptions of images. The same is true for rabbinic traditions about the pilgrimage sights in the halcyon temple days.³⁸

In the third century CE, Plotinus exploited the importance of the visual, sensory, and material nature of divine images in his mystical philosophy. He commended the sages of old for this way of capturing the *eidos* (form or image) of the gods in matter.³⁹ Almost a century later, Julian vividly expressed the delight in seeing images, particularly those of the gods:

Therefore, too, whoever loves the gods, does he not gaze steadfastly (*horōntas*) upon the statues (*agalmata*) and the images (*eikonas*) of the gods, worshipping and at the same time shuddering at the gods looking at him (*horōntas*) from the unknown (lit. unseen, *aphanous*).⁴⁰

Seeing, especially in the context of the sacred, is bound up with pleasure, deep affect, and physical responsiveness. It is a reciprocal experience in which one not only sees but is also seen. As discussed in Chapter 2, such vision is termed "mystic" or "ritual-centered viewing" by Jaś Elsner.⁴¹ Elsner shows how cult images from the second century mandated this viewing, noting an increase in symbolic, rather than naturalistic, depiction of figures in cultic contexts from late Roman to Byzantine periods, ultimately culminating in the Christian visual idiom of the icon. These images, with their frontal gaze, incorporate the viewer, "eyeballing those that approach into submission."⁴² Key to this sacred viewing is a shared gaze between viewer and image.⁴³ The Tannaitic (re)invention of the thrice-yearly pilgrimage, particularly what the Tannaim designated as *re'iyah* or *re'ayon*, demonstrates that they, too, thought of the divine-human ocular encounter in terms of a reciprocal vision. In such a visual economy, one way out, perhaps

critique of pagan images and wonders whether statutes can substitute for having not been "given the experience of seeing the gods." He goes on to say that statues actually demonstrate lack of belief in the gods: "He is convicted of having no faith in his own religious beliefs who needs to see what he holds, afraid that a mystery unseen may after all be nothing" (Arnobius of Sicca, *Case Against the Pagans*, 8, trans. McCracken, vol. II, 460). In Greco-Roman and rabbinic antiquity, one "saw" a dream. On dreaming as a kind of seeing, see Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams*, 21. We learn from Artemidorus of Daldis that seeing the image of a god in a dream was the same as seeing the god himself (Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica*, 2.33, 35, 37–39).

³⁸ Much of what follows is heavily indebted to Francis, "Living icons," and to Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 1–28. On Pausanias and the emphasis on the sight of the god, see Rutherford, "Tourism."

³⁹ Plotinus, *Enneads* IV.3.11. See Francis, "Living icons," 584–85.

⁴⁰ Julian, *Oration on the Mother of the Gods* 294c–d (in *Works of Emperor Julian*, Wright, vol. II, 310–11). James Francis emphasizes that Julian stressed the distinction between the images and the gods themselves; see Francis, "Living icons," 584–93. However, the line between image and the god was not always so clear; see Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 1–28.

⁴¹ Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 3 and *passim*. ⁴² Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 22.

⁴³ See Lucian, *De Syria Dea* 32.

the only way, is to disengage the eyes. The prohibition of looking per se would make sense, even beyond rigorisms, in a world in which vision is no casual affair and in which seeing is essential to the ritual experience of the sacred.

Philo offers another Jewish example, this time from the first century CE, which insists on the dangers and benefits of looking at images, sacred or profane. Philo's notion of sight was Platonic. He not only granted it a central role in his religious philosophy, but even presented it as a peculiarly Jewish capacity. Access to the divine, even if partial, is granted through "the eyes of the soul."⁴⁴ In his account of Gaius' attempt to erect his image in the Jerusalem temple, Philo also considers the perils of vision. Petronius, who was to carry out Gaius' order, knows that the Jews,

understanding their laws to be oracles delivered by God, and having been taught this lesson from the earliest age, carry as a statue in their souls (*agalmatophorouσι*) the images (*eikonas*) of the ordained laws. Then, beholding (*kathorōntes*) the visible (*enargeis*) figures and forms of these, they are continually amazed at them.⁴⁵

These heart-borne images of the Torah laws elicit a positive form of visual piety that is contrasted with the negative and idolatrous beholding of Gaius' image. Philo's Jewish leaders refuse even to look upon the latter, declaring that they would rather have their eyes struck out before "seeing what no one of our ancestors ever saw."⁴⁶ In order to emphasize the very real effect that beholding idolatrous images would have upon their sensory and spiritual sensibilities, they invoke the Gorgon, giving Gaius' image the compliment of comparison. They declare that just as those "who beheld it [the Gorgon] immediately became stones and rocks," so,

Consider, if some of our people should see (*theasainto*) the statue (*andrianta*) escorted through into the shrine, would they not turn into stones, with their joints becoming frozen, their eyes (*ophthalmōn*) becoming frozen, so that they were unable to move?⁴⁷

⁴⁴ See e.g. Philo, *De Abrahamo*, 57–58. On Philo's use of Platonic physiological theories of vision, see Niehoff, *Philo*, 198. See also Delling, "One who sees God."

⁴⁵ Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium* 31.210–12 (translation based on Colson, *On the Embassy to Gaius*, with minor changes). See also Philo, *De Vita Mosi* 2.10, which refers to carrying the commandments around as images, and Runia, "Verba Philonica."

⁴⁶ Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium* 31.224. The visual language in this section is repetitive and emphatic: "We who were fortunate to excess have endured many things into ripe old age, in order to see (*theasōmetha*) what no one of our ancestors ever saw (*eide*); with what eyes (*ophthalmois*)? They will be struck out before, with a wretched soul and painful life, they [will] see (*opsontai*) such an evil, a spectacle impossible to look upon (*atheaton theān*), of which it is right neither to hear nor conceive."

⁴⁷ Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium* 31.237–38.

Here is a graphic example of intromissive visual theory, in which seeing an object has a mimetic effect upon the beholder: by beholding a statue the (literally) petrified viewer becomes one.⁴⁸ Viewers of idols become idols; hence the refusal to look. Philo, however, understands vision to be an essential way of perceiving the sacred. It is in this sense that we can understand the aversion of the gaze from idolatrous statues and its diversion to the *eikones* of the commandments. If a sacred kind of seeing is essential to the divine image, then it is essential not to partake in this visual communion. The view attributed to R. Judah can thus be understood not merely as a form of extremism, but rather as denying the sanctity of the gods' images by opting out of their visual economy altogether. This very opting out of the visual circuit, however, confirms the dominant currency of viewing. We will see how this potential criticism of gaze aversion, as well as a distinction between good and bad viewing, is assimilated into later rabbinic discourse.

Philo and R. Judah's rejections of idols do not stem just from a rejection of a crucial aspect of the idols' sanctity; they also clearly rest on the broader notions of the physicality and hapticity of vision. This brings us to the broader late-antique concern that idols were just one of many troubling visual objects that could harm body and soul. Both rabbis and church fathers, as we saw in the previous chapter, shared anxiety about various types of dangerous visual objects. Writing in North Africa and Egypt around the end of the second century CE, Tertullian and Clement focused on violence (the spectacles) and sex (women, idolatrous images) as dangerous visual objects.⁴⁹ Tertullian argues that if we are careful about what goes into our mouths and stomachs, we should surely keep our "nobler organs" free from the defilement of idolatry, and that we ought to have no part "whether by beholding or watching, in what we renounce."⁵⁰ He urged to restrain the senses from the "pleasures connected with sacrifices to idols." The eyes, according to Tertullian, do not have a filter, like the bowels, but "digest in the very spirit."⁵¹

⁴⁸ Compare the similar argument in Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Sermon 5 (ed. Langerbeck and Jaeger, 147): "For those who look (*blepontes*) towards the true God receive within themselves the characteristics of the divine nature; so too, those who turn their minds to the vanity of idols are transformed into the objects which they look at, and become stones instead of men" (in *From Glory to Glory*, trans. Musurillo, 184). Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 253a.

⁴⁹ Goldhill, "Erotic eye."

⁵⁰ Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 13 (in *Disciplinary*, trans. Arbesmann et al., 81–82). For rabbinic notions of consumptive vision in the context of prohibition, see *m. Middot* 4:5 and *Leviticus Rabbah* 23:13 (ed. Margalio, 11:548).

⁵¹ Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 13.

Clement of Alexandria advises that “the eyes especially are to be sparingly used, since it is better to slip with the feet than with the eyes.”⁵² He cautions that “languishing looks, and ogling, which is to wink with the eyes, is nothing else than to commit adultery with the eyes, lust skir-mishing through them.”⁵³ On the other hand, he admits that, “the eye contemplating beautiful objects (*kala*) gladdens the heart; that is, the eye which has learned rightly (*kalōs*) to see, gladdens.”⁵⁴ Early rabbis and Christians attempted to guard their prospective followers’ eyes from risky objects about the landscape, understanding that “good” seeing not only entailed vigilance but was something that required cultivation.⁵⁵

Averting the gaze in the Yerushalmi

The rabbis increasingly worked with such notions of the powerful impact of sight on body and soul to picture and frame a world of their own. We see a marked turn toward the visual by the Amoraim, as well as explicit invocation of visual theories, and in our particular case of idol viewing, we find an expansion of the available ocular options. In the later sources, we find the Tannaitic ban on looking contextualized and modified in new settings. The prohibition is limited to “idolatrous” images in certain contexts, and there may be cause to look if the circumstances are right.

- (1) Asyan the carpenter in the name of R. Yoḥanan, “Why are the images (*ikoniyot*) forbidden? Because they offer incense before them when they go up.”
- (2) R. Yoḥanan said, “It is permitted to look at them (*liro’tan*) when they go down. Why? ‘When the wicked are cut off you shall see it (*tir’eh*, read here as “look”)” (Psalms 37:34).
- (3) Writing that goes under figures (*tsurot*) and images (*ikoniyot*), one may not look (*mistakkelin*) at them on the Sabbath. And furthermore, one does not even look (*mistakkelin*) at images (*ikonot*) on weekdays. What is the reason? “Do not turn toward the idols” (Leviticus 19:4) – do not turn to worship them. R. Judah says, “Do not turn to see them literally (*lir’otan mammash*).”⁵⁶

Preceding this passage, the Yerushalmi narrows the underlying *mishnah*’s prohibitions against images to those that one can presume to have

⁵² Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 3:11 (trans. Wood, 252). ⁵³ Ibid. ⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ This visual vigilance flowers in post-Tannaitic writings and is productive as well as prohibitive. For the rewards of not looking at certain objects, see *Leviticus Rabbah* 23:13 (ed. Margaliot, 11:548) and *b. Megillah* 28a.

⁵⁶ *Y. Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42b–c. On *mammash* and related terms as “literal,” see Halivni, *Peshat and Derash*, 76 and references at 197. Relatedly, see Yadin, *Scripture as Logos*, 38–44, 61–68.

been worshipped.⁵⁷ Besides determining which *objects* are forbidden, the Yerushalmi also seeks to discover which *acts* are proscribed (whether they constitute worshipful behavior or benefit, *hana'ah*).⁵⁸

The initial prohibitive logic in (1) depends on the occurrence of cultic activity. R. Yohanan operates on the presumption that incense is offered to a cult image upon its erection. Even after a cult image had been consecrated, offerings of fruit, incense, flowers, cakes, wine, or grain were presented to objects ranging from imperial images to small paintings of domestic gods to grander statues of divine beings.⁵⁹ However, only in (2) is the content of the prohibition mentioned. This statement, also attributed to R. Yohanan, implies what is discussed explicitly in (3): that part of what is prohibited with respect to these presumptively idolatrous images is looking at them. While the editorial logic of the pericope, read as a whole, puts exception (2) before rule (3), the literary effect is heightened: the consecration upon the ascent of an image that forbids it to the Jewish gaze ("when they go up") is reversed upon its comeuppance or descent ("when they go down"). Following this exception, where looking at idols *is* allowed, the Yerushalmi cites the Tannaitic tradition we examined above, which states the logic for the prohibition itself.⁶⁰

What was initially a blanket prohibition now, through the editorial work of the Yerushalmi, grants the opportunity to look in the right circumstances: those that cannot possibly be conceived of as cultic viewing and which allow

⁵⁷ The question, "Why are icons forbidden?" in (1) continues to address the concerns of the underlying *mishnah* (*m. 'Avodah Zarah* 3:1), which begins, "All images are forbidden, since they are worshipped once a year." Successive mishnaic opinions then narrow the range of forbidden images based on their iconography, and, presumably, or at least this is the way the Yerushalmi reconciles these two types of bases for prohibition, the significance or lack thereof that this visual iconography has in terms of actual worship. The Yerushalmi goes on to narrow and refine the worship-based criteria of the prohibition, distinguishing between categories of images that can presumptively be identified as subject to worship (e.g. imperial cult images versus images of local authorities). Like the Mishnah, the Yerushalmi understands that not all images are cultic.

⁵⁸ See Lieberman, *Tosefta kifshutah*, III:282–83. As is evident in the Tannaitic sources and as is drawn out in the Palestinian Talmud, the content of the prohibition against idolatry ranges from actual worship to *hana'ah* (receiving any benefit from them). Two determinations are at stake: what objects are forbidden, i.e. what images are designated as idolatrous, and what is the content of the prohibition, i.e. what behaviors or acts are forbidden as idolatrous in and of themselves or as making use of a prohibited object.

⁵⁹ E.g. Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae*, 10.96–97, regarding the demand that those accused of worshipping Jesus offer incense and wine to the imperial image (placed among the statues of the gods). The cultic status of the imperial image was not stable. Neither were all emperors advocates of the imperial cult. See, e.g., Suetonius, *Tiberius* 26.1 in which Tiberius allows his image to be erected only among the adornments (*ornamenta*) of the temples rather than among the likenesses of the gods (*simulacra deorum*). Compare *m. 'Avodah Zarah* 3:4 for the distinction between an image that is ornamental [*noy*] versus that which is "treated as a god."

⁶⁰ It is a blending of *Sifra Qedoshim* 1 (ed. Weiss, 87a) and *t. Shabbat* 17:1.

the witnessing of iconoclasm. In this passage, the rise and fall of an idol is choreographed via two Jewish ocular responses, based on two different biblical verses, mandating looking away and looking toward (Leviticus 19:4; Psalms 37:34). It is hard not to think of what later scholars refer to as *damnatio memoriae*, the desecration or destruction of images of Roman emperors or prominent public figures who were posthumously condemned, or, in later times, the similar destruction of “idols” by Christians, gleefully documented in various sources.⁶¹

Even if a viewer was thought to absorb what was seen, we can understand, as the Yerushalmi’s editor did, that in certain contexts an image’s status and power are neutralized.⁶² R. Yoḥanan, who is demonstrably sensitive to the way worship invests an image with (illicit) sanctity (in (1)), “permits” looking (in (2)), using a proof-text that goes so far as to prophesy that those who turn to God *shall* see the wicked fall. This is similar to Eusebius’ emphatically visual descriptions of Jewish and pagan downfall as visible witness, for both victims and Christians, to the fulfillment of God’s promises.⁶³ In this regard, one might say that the gaze participates somehow in the destruction itself.⁶⁴ That looking is crucial here rather than incidental is evinced by the implication in R. Yoḥanan’s statement (2) that the default position is not to look at idols, as well as by the way sight repeatedly surfaces in this portion of the tractate.

Immediately following these halakhic deliberations, the pericope continues with a story that is clearly linked by the theme of idolatrous visuality:

When R. Naḥum bar Sima’y died, they covered the icons (*ikonta*) with mats. They said, “Just as he did not look at them (*la ḥamtun*) when he was alive, so he should not look at them (*yahminun*) in death.”

A few lines later, we are informed that R. Naḥum bar Sima’y was called “Naḥum the Holy of Holies,” “because he never in his life gazed at the image on a coin (*shelo’ hibbit betsurat matbea’ miyamav*).”⁶⁵ Even if such behavior

⁶¹ E.g. Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 3.54–57 and *y. Berakhot* 9:2, 13d. See Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation*. On deliberate recycling of idols, see Mark the Deacon, *Vita S. Porphyrii* 76, in which flagstones of the former temple are reused. Furstenberg, “Idolatry annulment,” argues that *damnatio memoriae* and the imperial cult served as the very basis for the rabbinic laws of *bittul avodah zarah*. See also Furstenberg, “The rabbinic view of idolatry.”

⁶² Cf. *m. Avodah Zarah* 3:4.

⁶³ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 3.54–57; Eusebius, *Theophania* 1.18; 4.3, 16, 20.

⁶⁴ The rabbis even invest the removal of idolatry with liturgical significance; see *m. Berakhot* 9:1 and *t. Berakhot* 6:2.

⁶⁵ *y. Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42c (paralleled in *y. Megillah* 1:10, 72b). Given that R. Yohanan has just implied that all looking at idols is forbidden other than in specific circumstances, why does R. Naḥum bar Sima’y deserve special praise? This is probably due to R. Naḥum’s abstention even from images on

was seen as super-saintly, as is clear from R. Naḥum's title, it also represents a ban on idol viewing taken to its logical extreme. In spurning all images, it does not distinguish between cultic and other images; undeniably, it thereby answers the potential problem inherent in making that very distinction: how to identify the status of an image without perchance coming to gaze upon an idol?

What is so interesting about R. Naḥum's vigilance, even postmortem, is the implication that the dead continue to see. The Yerushalmi addresses this and concludes that the righteous dead do actually see and hear. In making this determination, the Yerushalmi highlights *sensory* perception, reminding us what is at stake in the refusal to see. Following this exemplary anecdote is the report that Rabbi was called "our holy rabbi" because he never gazed (*shelo' hibbit*) upon his circumcision. While one could understand the refusal to look at the penis as a precaution against touching, it seems hard, especially in this context, to ignore the common view that vision itself was intertwined with touch.⁶⁶ The rabbinic understanding of the gaze as haptic is graphically expressed in *y. Hallah* 2:4, 58c, which equates looking at female genitalia with intercourse, as we saw in the previous chapter.⁶⁷

The feasibility of walking around cities in the late-antique Mediterranean world and managing to avoid casting one's eye on images is hard to imagine, perhaps as hard to imagine as going through one's life without gazing upon the body. And yet, we know that late-antique people trained their bodies, including their eyes, in precisely such ways.⁶⁸ In the fourth century, John Chrysostom recommended ocular dieting: "Let the eyes fast . . . for looking is the food of the eyes."⁶⁹ Whether as a form of *askesis*, as self-protection, or both, rabbis, church fathers, and monks guarded their gazes.

Thus when it came to idolatry, Clement warned polytheists that they sinned not only by making images, but also by looking at, or even hearing

coins (a few lines below). Given that the Yerushalmi does distinguish idols from images in terms of veneration, it is questionable whether images (even of gods) on coins fall into the category of idol.

⁶⁶ For exhortations against men touching their genitalia, see *m. Niddah* 2:1; *t. Niddah* 2:8; *b. Niddah* 13a.

⁶⁷ In the Babylonian parallel (*b. Shabbat* 118b), this equivalence is arguably enhanced when the Talmud adds, "Rabbi's hand never went under his tunic." Note that the heightened sacred accolade of the innermost sanctum ("holy of holies" as opposed to "holy") is awarded to the one whose eyes are averted from idols. A similar hierarchy and juxtaposition of gaze aversion in an erotic and idolatrous context is present in *b. Berakhot* 61a.

⁶⁸ See Pachomius, *Praecepta* 2, in Boon, *Pachomiana Latina*, 13; Shenoute, *Canon* 3, Codex YA 257–58. See Chapter 4, nn. 52 and 53.

⁶⁹ John Chrysostom, *De Statuis*, 3.11.

about, them.⁷⁰ For Clement, as for other apologists, censure stemmed from the very illogic of worshipping objects “apprehended by sight,” whether humanly produced or found naturally.⁷¹ Cyprian situates the sin of idolatry amidst a vivid array of sights – good, bad, ugly, benign, beneficent, and dangerous.⁷² Elsewhere, he castigates idol-worshippers in visual terms, enumerating “looking upon idols” as part of the sin and recommending repentant tears as a way to wash such sinful eyes.⁷³

A deep sense of the participatory nature of vision coalesced around an abhorrence of the Roman spectacles. Tertullian reasoned that by watching, one not only became violent, but one was thereby implicated in the violence: intromissive and extramissive visual theory at work.⁷⁴ Athenagoras put it bluntly, “We see little difference between watching a man being put to death and killing him. So we have given up such spectacles.”⁷⁵ Sight is not passive; it participates in, and even affects, reality. The witness of violence becomes party to it. So, too, the rabbis declared, “He who sits in the stadium is a murderer.”⁷⁶

Writers such as Tertullian not only inveighed against bad sights, but also attempted to divert the gaze with the promise of goodly sights.⁷⁷ Tertullian’s strategy recalls that of the Yerushalmi: he redirects the good Christian gaze away from the spectacles by promising righteous (non-)viewers the tantalizing “free sight” of the lurid and graphic writhing of sinners being punished. Here we have violent spectacle converted into something good.⁷⁸

⁷⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 4 (in *Exhortation*, trans. Butterworth, 138–39).

⁷¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 4 (142–43). ⁷² Cyprian, *Ad Donatum*.

⁷³ Cyprian, *De Lapsis* 30, who also points out (*De Lapsis*, 28) that part of the sin is being seen worshipping. This is a concern for the rabbis, as well, e.g. *t. ‘Avodah Zarah* 6:6; cf. Augustine, *Epistulae* 153, Augustine’s response to Publicola’s question about drinking from an idolatrous fountain. The rabbis’ concern is present even when one is not actually sinning, i.e. *mar’it ‘ayin* (what appears to the eye), e.g. *m. Kil’ayim* 9:2; *m. Shabbat* 19:6; *y. Yevamot* 2:4, 3d; *b. Betsah* 9a.

⁷⁴ Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, 15.2–6.

⁷⁵ Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis* 35.5 (trans. Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, 338). See also Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* 3.15.

⁷⁶ *T. ‘Avodah Zarah* 2:7. That this pronouncement does not point only to homicide by omission (as indicated by the exception to the rule that follows, which allows one to go to the stadium to save lives) is clear from the way it is linked to participation in idolatry (*t. ‘Avodah Zarah* 2:5) and to “seeing the sorcerers and enchanters” (*t. ‘Avodah Zarah* 2:6).

⁷⁷ Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, 30.

⁷⁸ Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 29–30. Cf. *Leviticus Rabbah* 13:3 (ed. Margaliot, 1:277) in which the reward of those righteous persons who refrain from watching the spectacles of wild animals in combat is the viewing of the Behemoth and Leviathan fighting in the world to come. See Frankfurter, “Martyrology.” On eschatological spectacle in Tertullian and Jewish sources, see Levinson, “Athlete,” and references therein. Tertullian is aware, as he describes the lurid sights at the spectacles, of the problems inherent in doing so, “[N]o one, however, is able to describe all the details at full length except one who is still in the habit of going to the spectacles. I myself prefer to leave the picture incomplete rather than to recall it” (Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 19, trans. Arbesmann, 91).

The extramissive nature of vision allows us to understand these as punishing gazes. It was not just the viewer who was impacted by seeing; sight also changed the object that was seen. We move from averting the gaze to actively engaging it.

**Looking awry: *y. 'Avodah Zarah* 3:8, 43b and
y. Mo'ed Qatan 3:7, 83c**

In a later passage in *y. 'Avodah Zarah*, we find a trio of anecdotes about promenading pairs of rabbis who encounter idols.⁷⁹ In each case, a rabbi asks his senior colleague about the appropriate behavior in the face of an image. In the first two stories, the latter tells the former to “pass in front of it and blind its eyes (*vesamme 'eneh*).”⁸⁰ In the final anecdote of the trilogy, R. Jacob b. Idi says the following in answer to R. Joshua b. Levi's inquiry:

Naḥum the Holy of Holies passed, and you will not pass? Pass in front of it and blind its eyes (*vesamme 'eneh*).⁸¹

The memory of the visual virtuoso R. Naḥum bar Sima'y is the paradoxical exemplar for passing in front of the image. The logic here seems to run along the following lines: If even such a visually vigilant sage as R. Naḥum had no problem passing in front of such images, who are you to quibble? But of what does the injunction to “pass in front of it and blind its eyes” actually consist? Before answering this question, let us consider, along with the Yerushalmi, what the opposite of this behavior might be.

A variation of this story is embedded in a different narrative context, in *y. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:7, 83c, with instructive additional elements.⁸² The story features R. Yoḥanan walking along with R. Jacob bar Idi (the same person who invokes the example of R. Naḥum bar Sima'y in *y. 'Avodah Zarah*). They encounter R. Ele'azar; R. Yoḥanan is insulted when R. Ele'azar sees him (*ḥame leh*) and hides, instead of extending the customary deference.⁸³

⁷⁹ The underlying *mishnah*, *m. 'Avodah Zarah* 3:8, discusses what constitutes forbidden benefit (*hana'ah*).

⁸⁰ *y. 'Avodah Zarah* 3:8, 43b.

⁸¹ In *b. 'Avodah Zarah* 50a–b, R. Yoḥanan invokes the holy Naḥum to encourage people not to refrain from walking on flagstones made out of recycled idolatry (*mercurius*). Compare Mark the Deacon, *Vita S. Porphyrii* 76, in which marble from a destroyed temple is recycled into flagstones so as to be desecrated by being trodden underfoot, which caused people not to walk on them.

⁸² Paralleled in *y. Berakhot* 2:1, 4b; *y. Shegalim* 2:5, 47a; *b. Yevamot* 96b–97a. On this anecdote, see Schwartz, *Mediterranean Society*?, 135–36; Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 114.

⁸³ Compare *y. Kil'ayim* 9:4, 32b, in which R. Yishma'el b. R. Yose is offended by R. Ḥiyya's failure to greet him.

In a midrashic explanation that stresses vision, R. Jacob argues that unlike Palestinian rabbis, the Babylonians express respect toward their teachers by fulfilling the verse, “the young men saw me (*ra’uni*) and hid” (Job 29:8). As we shall see in the next chapter, this is the opposite of the apparently customary Palestinian greeting, described, among other places, in *y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65c–d.⁸⁴ There, Leviticus 19:32, “You shall rise before the aged and honor the face of the elder,” is the basis for a basic rule of rising and greeting the rabbinic teacher.

As we will see in the next chapter, the passage in *y. Bikkurim* presents two anecdotes about rabbis who go out of their way to “see” sages or elders in order that they might “rise” before them.⁸⁵ Such emphasis on seeing the sage, and on attendant forms of veneration, puts us in the realm of visual piety, defined by Georgia Frank as “practices in which a lingering gaze conjures a sacred presence.”⁸⁶ *y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65c–d sharpens this focus on visual piety by contrastive means. It presents an anecdote of two Amoraim who conspicuously continue to study instead of rising and greeting a Jewish official who has bought his office. To such a pretender, these rabbis apply Exodus 20:20, forbidding the making of idols of silver and gold, as well as Habakkuk 2:19, “Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, ‘Awake!’ to a dumb stone, ‘Arise!’ Can this give revelation?”⁸⁷ If, as we will see in Chapter 6, the good visual object (the rabbinic sage) carries with it attendant visual pieties, then the bad visual object is a false idol who claims veneration when it is undeserved.⁸⁸ Deliberate and conspicuous disrespect is mandated.

This brings us back to *y. Mo’ed Qatan* 3:7, 83c, in which a similar strategy of contrast is deployed. Babylonian visual veneration of “seeing and fleeing” is contrasted with behavior appropriate toward an idol. After R. Yoḥanan complains to R. Jacob b. Idi about R. Ele’azar’s disrespectful behavior, R. Jacob asks how they should proceed when encountering an idolatrous image. R. Yoḥanan answers, “Would you accord it honor? Pass in front of it and blind its eye (*vesamme’eneh*).”

The phrase “blind its eye” has been understood in various ways. Some revise it to “blind *your* eye,” a form of “looking away,” in order to harmonize

⁸⁴ However, see *b. Qiddushin* 33b.

⁸⁵ On this *sugya*, see Schwartz, *Mediterranean Society?*, 149–61.

⁸⁶ Frank, *Memory*, 174.

⁸⁷ In the same *sugya*, *y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65d, Jacob of Kefar Nevoraya contrasts the pretender/idol in Habakkuk 2:19 with the rabbi/God in Habakkuk 2:20, “But God is in his holy sanctuary,” claiming that the latter refers to R. Yitshaq b. Ele’azar while he is in a synagogue.

⁸⁸ The text adds, “Does he know how to teach?” and forbids rising for such a person or calling him “rabbi.”

it with R. Naḥum's visual vigilance.⁸⁹ Particularly in light of the associated anecdotes in which R. Naḥum bar Sima'y is invoked, this might suggest passing in front of the idol with an averted gaze.⁹⁰ Others read the phrase straightforwardly as "blind *its* eye." The material evidence of late-antique iconoclasm reveals that the eyes were among the most oft struck organs on all kinds of images, showing how "the desecration of vital sensory organs . . . negates the 'power' of these images to see."⁹¹ However, most have understood "blind *its* eye" metaphorically, as an instruction to act with deliberate disrespect, tantamount to defacing the image.⁹² In *y. Mo'ed Qatan*, R. Yoḥanan instructs R. Jacob b. Idi to walk past an object of worship with no obeisance as a sign of disrespect. He must therefore concede that, by contrast, R. Ele'azar's decision to avoid his teacher was indeed a form of veneration.

How is this eye-blinding accomplished? Another Palestinian source suggests that the eye of the viewer works extramissively to blind the idol's eye. Here the priest of an idol (a descendant of Moses) is said to have cast a malevolent (lit. "narrow") eye upon his cult image (*shehayetah 'eno tsarah*).⁹³ The anecdote relates how he would embarrass potential worshippers, discouraging them from worshipping the idol. The man describes what he does as: "I take my payment, and I blind *its* eye (*umesamme 'eneh*)." This is clearly not a literal act of iconoclasm, and it is terminologically and causally related to the priest's malevolent gaze toward his ostensible object of veneration. It is tempting to think that this expression, which describes what might be called an "eye-blinding gaze," might have its source in acts

⁸⁹ See Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 173; Sperber, *City*, 28; Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Palestinian Aramaic*, 381. To my knowledge, no one reads this literally, as mandating an act of iconoclasm.

⁹⁰ Schäfer, "Jews and gentiles," 348 ("close [your] eyes"), and Hayes, *Between*, 214–15, n. 34.

⁹¹ See Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation*, 3, 217. Such mutilation makes the sensory powerlessness of idols visible, as per the oft-cited critique, "They have eyes but do not see" (Psalms 135:16).

⁹² A literal translation is discomfiting and difficult to assimilate with the mostly non-iconoclastic Palestinian Amoraic tradition. See Blidstein, "R. Yohanan," 158, "spit in its eye"; see also Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 114, who discusses this phrase in the context of Jewish resistance to the imperium. *Samme 'eneh* is also used in the context of corruption, bribery, and personal injury law, e.g. *m. Bava Qamma* 8:7. In Tannaitic sources, the expression is used in the context of personal injury, but in most other iterations of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac this word combination is used either adjectivally, to describe blindness or blind people, or as a verb to refer to metaphorical acts of blinding, such as in bribery, e.g. Deuteronomy 16:19, "For bribes blind the eyes of the wise." However, in contexts related to idolatrous images, the Bavli deploys the phrase in a literal fashion (*b. Avodah Zarah* 43b).

⁹³ *Song of Songs Rabbah* 2:5. For partial parallels, see *y. Berakhot* 9:2, 13d; *y. Sanhedrin* 11:5, 30b (cf. *b. Bava Batra* 109b). In *Genesis Rabbah* 38:13 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 1:360–64), Abraham uses similar language and tactics to dissuade potential buyers from purchasing idols. He ends up committing physical, not just metaphorical, iconoclasm.

of image desecration or violence so often expressed by gouging out the eyes of images. Such literal acts of violence were another way to cut off the circuit of the reciprocal gaze, upon which image-worship depended.

In order to understand the power of the malignant gaze, we might also look to apotropaic images designed to neutralize the evil eye, which were plentiful in late-antique Palestine, Syria, and Egypt.⁹⁴ These often depicted spears, snakes, and other creatures attacking and piercing an eye, itself sometimes depicted as bleeding or weeping. The evil eye is neutralized by blinding.

The narrative of the idolatrous priest shows that the effect of the priest's "narrow eye" was to "blind the eye" of the idol. An extramissive gaze strikes the cult image at its core, in its eyes, negating its capacity "to look back" at the cultic viewer.⁹⁵ In the narrative, the priest also seeks to accomplish this with caustic comments to his constituents such as, "Someone as old as you worships something that is but a few days old?" In sapping the image of its power, he also takes away its worshippers' capacity to receive it, another strike at reciprocal viewing. Thus, the story not only employs an extramissive model of vision, but also turns the more specific dynamic of sacred viewing on its head: The malevolent affect streaming from the viewer impacts the power of the image.

This eye-blinding negation of the image is the behavior recommended by R. Yoḥanan, along with all of the senior sages in the three pairs who encounter idols in the *y. 'Avodah Zarah* passage. Perhaps something of the power of this confrontational viewing practice is present in an anecdote about R. Yoḥanan's funeral. "When R. Yoḥanan died, the icons bent over; they said it was because there was no icon like him."⁹⁶ This, together

⁹⁴ There are two examples of such eyes among the ceiling tiles in the Dura Europos synagogue. See Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 41–45, 48–49, figs. 11–12, and Stern, "Mapping devotion," 487–88. Kraeling suggests that these two designs are of good and evil eyes. The latter is depicted with knives, snakes, and insects attacking it. See further *Testament of Solomon* 18:25. On the "much-suffering eye," see Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets*, 97–99, and Montgomery, "Some early amulets." On Palestinian apotropaic mirror plaques supposed to refract the evil eye, as well as on a Jewish funerary inscription calling on it to burst, see Gregg, "Marking."

⁹⁵ *Genesis Rabbah* 87:5 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 111:1068) describes how Potiphar's wife covers the face of an idol above her bed, presumably so it will not witness her adultery. Joseph warns that she ought to be far more concerned about the one whose "eyes . . . run forth throughout the whole earth" (Zechariah 4:10).

⁹⁶ *y. 'Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42c (paralleled in *b. Mo'ed Qatan* 25b). Just before this we find: "When R. Naḥum bar Sima'y died, they covered the icons (*ikonta*) with mats. They said, 'Just as he did not look (*la ḥamtun*) at them when he was alive, so he should not look (*yahminun*) at them in death' . . . When R. Ḥanan died, the statues (*andartayya*) were bent over." Note the similar language

with the refusal of R. Naḥum bar Sima'y to gaze at idols in death as in life, appears in the same series of rabbinic funerary legends consisting of postmortem miracles that strike at the heart of Roman imperial symbols. The whole unit follows immediately after the prohibition against looking at idols, discussed above. In the narrative in *y. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:7, 83c, Rabbi Yoḥanan is implicitly cast as an icon of sorts to whom visual piety is due, in contrast to the disrespectful treatment that an idol deserves. Here, in death, he continues as in life, confronting idols rather than avoiding them, and perhaps even becoming an object of *their* piety.⁹⁷ Alternatively, as suggested in the previous chapter, the icons bow to R. Yoḥanan's better looks.⁹⁸ The implication is that R. Yoḥanan somehow registers for the icons, which are shamed into bowing to his superior iconicity.⁹⁹ This account of his death follows in close proximity to that of R. Naḥum bar Sima'y, who took the route of ocular aversion rather than confrontation.

In *y. 'Avodah Zarah*, we thus have in law and narrative two models for idol viewing, side by side, at least editorially speaking: avoidance (looking away) and confrontation (looking awry). In the Palestinian Amoraic sources, we have so far seen evidence of (1) visual prohibition or total visual asceticism with situational permission to look; (2) circumstantial permission to look down upon; and (3) a disrespectful gaze. In the last instance, the viewing is active and potentially damaging, in contrast to appropriate visual pieties before rabbinic sages.

for overturning images in *b. Mo'ed Qatan* 15b and *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma'el, Bahodesh* 8 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 233), except the image in those cases refers to the human as the image of God.

⁹⁷ An unusually iconoclastic anecdote also features R. Yohanan instructing Bar Derosay to break the images (*tsalmayya*) in the bathhouses (*y. 'Avodah Zarah* 4:4, 43d). See Schäfer, "Jews and gentiles," 350.

⁹⁸ Given this anecdote's placement, it is plausible that the storyteller implies that the icons respond to R. Yoḥanan upon seeing him. First, the nearby anecdote about R. Naḥum bar Sima'y clearly conveys visual proximity between rabbi and idolatry, as the Talmud itself asks whether the R. Nahum could see the idols whilst dead (and answers in the affirmative). The juxtaposition of these two stories moves us from the gaze of the rabbi to the (implicit) gaze of the idols. Second, just before these funeral anecdotes there is the terminologically related discussion, in which R. Yoḥanan opines about (not) looking at images (when they come down).

⁹⁹ For the reverse dynamic, in which idols turn around and nullify their worshippers, see *y. 'Avodah Zarah* 4:7, 44a: "R. Naḥman in the name of R. Mana, 'In the time to come, idols will come and spit in the faces of their worshippers and shame them and cause them to be nullified from the world.' Why? 'All idol-worshippers will be ashamed' (Psalms 97:7). R. Naḥman in the name of R. Mana, 'In the time to come, idols will come and bow down before the Holy One, Blessed be He, and then be nullified from the world.' Why? 'All gods will bow before him' (Psalms 97:7)." See *m. 'Avodah Zarah* 4:5 on the insufficiency of spitting to nullify the idolatrous nature of an image. Cf. *y. 'Avodah Zarah* 4:4, 44a (paralleled in *b. 'Avodah Zarah* 43a), where Bar Kappara urges a gentile boy to spit or urinate on an idolatrous image on a ring, and *b. Sanhedrin* 93b, where an idol is said to have been castrated (*nistaresah*).

Liturgical looking

A final example of looking awry at idols finds its origins in the lists of “vision” blessings in *m. Berakhot* 9:1–2 and *t. Berakhot* 6:2–6.¹⁰⁰ An all-too-brief foray into these novel liturgical formulae must suffice. In these blessings, the rabbinic viewer is brought through a series of sights, including the miraculous, the aesthetic, meteorological, topographical, astronomical, anthropological, zoological, arboreal, and marine. For each seeing (*re'iyah*), the utterance (*amirah*) of a blessing is mandated. These utterances are not passive responses to what is seen; they actively bring various components of the viewscape into focus, *effecting* that which they purport to *describe*.¹⁰¹

Importantly, when read as a textual unit, each list, with its iteration of the phrase “*harō'eh* X, *omer* Y,” constitutes an instruction manual on how to perform vision. In other words, the ostensibly responsive nature of these blessings ought not occlude the fact that in their careful writing and instruction, these texts *themselves* anticipate and frame vision before the occurrence of any actual encounter. The content of the Tannaitic list poses itself as if in response to spontaneous events, but in its careful composition it is anything but spontaneous.

Among the visual objects effected liturgically are idols. The Mishnah instructs: “One who sees a place where miracles were performed for Israel says, ‘Blessed is the one who performed miracles for our ancestors in this place.’ [One who sees] a place from which idolatry has been uprooted says, ‘Blessed is the one who rooted out idolatry from our land.’”¹⁰² The Tosefta

¹⁰⁰ See Introduction, above. For an excellent analysis of these “vision blessings,” in terms of their relationship to the other blessings in *Berakhot*, see Rosen Zvi, “Responsive blessings.” For an analysis of these blessings, their visual emphasis, and their expansion in the Yerushalmi and the Bavli see Neis, “Pilgrimage itineraries.”

¹⁰¹ The iterated instruction, “One who sees X, says Y,” prescribes a speech and vision act which could be properly classed as performative, in that it does not merely describe or refer to a past act or fact, but *creates* the action or context to which it simultaneously refers. X *becomes* X by being *seen* and *declared* as such, in ritualized fashion. Vision is ritualized through speech; visual objects are effected through gaze and word. The fact that verbal pronouncement is conjoined to the act of seeing does not make this any less a performance of vision. Such collaboration of verbal and visual techniques was also crucial to the work of Christian pilgrimage in the enlivening of contemporary locations with biblical pasts. On ritual, performance, and the senses in late-antique Christian sources, see Frank, “Taste and see.” In addition, there is much evidence from neurocognitive, psychological, and linguistic studies to suggest that what humans see is very much a function of what and how they are trained to see, and that the brain of the viewer, as well as linguistic iteration and pedagogy, makes a potentially larger contribution to vision than the sense data given at any moment. See Smith, “From fragments to geometric shape”; Lupyan and Spivey, “Making the invisible visible”; Wade and Swanston, *Visual Perception*, 22–24, 215–35; and Hubel, *Eye, Brain, and Vision*, 59–60. In this sense, blessings might be understood as not just a discursive aspect of a scopic regime, but rather as having reality-granting effect themselves.

¹⁰² *M. Berakhot* 9:1.

presents a slightly different formulation for seeing the remains of idolatry and provides for an additional scenario:

- (A) One who sees idolatry says, "Blessed is the one who is slow to anger."
- (B) [One who sees] a place from which idolatry had been rooted out says, "Blessed is the one who rooted out idolatry from our land."
- (C) "May it be your will Lord our God that idolatry be rooted out from all the places of Israel, and that the hearts of your servants return to your worship."

These blessings register and ritualize both the visible presence and absence of an idol. The formula for the former is a curse, even if euphemistically phrased; the object of sight is liturgically erased. For the blessing over sight of idolatry's removal, the Tosefta includes a longer formula that is far broader in its hopes for the total annihilation of all idolatry. Thus in Tannaitic sources, besides the injunction not to look, we have the possibility for what we might call liturgical looking, perhaps the most actively destructive behavior of non-Jewish cult objects contemplated by the Palestinian rabbis of the second and third centuries. By seeing and uttering the blessing or curse, the spectator entreats God to carry out the physical act: Seeing and uttering is thus also prescriptive.¹⁰³

These collections of sight-triggered and constitutive blessings, combined with the tradition of not looking at idols, arguably form the stirrings of a Tannaitic visual regime. More generally, within this regime of the visual, the rabbis create ways of recognizing the pleasurable and the repulsive, the joyous and the mournful. Thus, seeing nature's wonders or places where miracles were wrought might elicit blessings and verses of praise, while beholding disfigured persons, the temple ruins, or idolatry will evoke responses of condolence, mourning, or imprecation. The taming of the visual landscape along these lines inscribes rabbinic history and their vision of the present into the contemporary world.

William Horbury reads the particular conjunction in *m. Berakhot* 9:1 of miraculous sites and destroyed idolatry as "zealot-like spirit," in remembering the Jewish revolts, claiming that Jews sanctified the land by establishing

¹⁰³ In second- or third-century Roman Palestine, it is unlikely that more actively destructive behavior than prayerful gazing would have been contemplated. Nullification (*bittul*) of an idol (rendering it permissible) could only be accomplished by its owner. In other hypothetical scenarios the rabbis include abandoned (and potentially usable) idols (or fragments thereof) which are consigned to destruction (e.g. *m. 'Avodah Zarah* 3:3). However in these scenarios the property is ownerless. The notion of nullification (*bittul*) requires the owner of the idol to nullify it. Other situations include those in which abandoned (and potentially usable) idols are consigned to destruction rather than use, e.g. *m. 'Avodah Zarah* 3:3, but these are clearly supposed to be actions in scenarios where the property is ownerless, rather than acts of vandalism.

a “network of places” or memorial “spots.”¹⁰⁴ While it is true that in their Tannaitic context, these blessings are two among quite a range of sight-triggered formulae, nonetheless, Horbury’s insight that the call to highlight miraculous sites and to mark the removal (or presence) of “idolatry” was linked to the production of memory and place under Roman imperialism is very much in line with how the later rabbis take up these blessings.¹⁰⁵ Each of these blessings is greatly expanded in later sources. For example, what starts life as “One who sees a place where miracles were performed for Israel” (*m. Berakhot* 9:1) becomes the basis for veritable sight-seeing itineraries, whose liturgical and performative visual techniques bear striking affinities to those in Christian pilgrimage sources.¹⁰⁶ Similar expansions occur with respect to seeing idolatry and the signs of its removal.

The Yerushalmi expands *m. Berakhot* 9:1, incorporating material from the Tosefta, into three types of visual encounters with the removal of idolatry, each with its own liturgical formula: (i) a scenario in which all idolatry is wiped out in the land of Israel; (ii) one in which it is uprooted from one particular place, but not the whole land; and (iii) one in which it is uprooted in one place, only to be reestablished in another.¹⁰⁷ In the last case of seeing idolatry uprooted but reestablished in another location, there are two blessings to be uttered. The first blesses God for being “slow to anger” when seeing the place in which it was reestablished, as per the Tosefta; but the Yerushalmi modifies the blessing recorded in the Mishnah and Tosefta to be said upon seeing the place from which idolatry was uprooted:

Blessed is the one who uprooted idolatry from *this place*. May it be your will, Lord our God, God of our ancestors, *that just as you uprooted it from this place*, so shall you uproot it from *all* places, and that you shall return the hearts of those who serve it to serve you, *and no more shall there be found any worshipper of idolatry*.¹⁰⁸

The Yerushalmi even goes on to extend the requirement to recite a blessing to include seeing idolatry outside the land of Israel, thus going well beyond

¹⁰⁴ Horbury, “Land, sanctuary and worship,” 213–14.

¹⁰⁵ Rosen Zvi, “‘You shall destroy all places.’”

¹⁰⁶ *Y. Berakhot* 9:1, 12d; *b. Berakhot* 54a. I develop this idea in “Pilgrimage itineraries.”

¹⁰⁷ *Y. Berakhot* 9:1, 13b (paralleled in *b. Berakhot* 57b): “Our mishnah [refers to] when [idolatry] has been uprooted from *all* places in the land of Israel, but if it was uprooted in one place, he says . . . If it was uprooted from one place, he says . . . If it was uprooted from one place and then reestablished in another, in the place where it was put, one says . . . and in the place from which it was uprooted one says . . .”

¹⁰⁸ *Y. Berakhot* 9:1, 13b (paralleled in *b. Berakhot* 57b). The italics indicate the Palestinian Talmud’s additions. Unlike the Yerushalmi, the Bavli distinguishes between Jewish and non-Jewish idolaters and thinks in terms of conversion, not repentance.

biblical iconoclastic mandates. The attention in *y. Berakhot* to the destruction and reemergence of idolatrous sites finds companionship with the scenario in *y. 'Avodah Zarah* 3:8, 43b, in which the erection and removal of an icon is contemplated. Both these sources echo what we know of the upheaval of the material landscape of fourth-century Palestine.¹⁰⁹ This period saw the beginning of the removal, replacement, and sometimes recycling of “pagan” objects.¹¹⁰ In this context, in which idolatry shifted rather than disappeared, an imagined future of its total erasure from the land of Israel, and even beyond, must have been particularly appealing.¹¹¹ The kind of active seeing guaranteed by late-antique understandings of extramissive vision allowed a minority to project its alternative vision liturgically upon a shifting viewscape, whose material elements were largely controlled by others.

Liturgical looking, then, is another example of an active gaze that affects as much as it effects the object of its glare, particularly in the case of an idol (that still stands). Religio-political shifts in the Palestinian viewscape help us make as much sense of the Yerushalmi's fine distinctions as its general hermeneutic bent toward dialectical elaboration of Tannaitic and biblical materials. However, in the Babylonian parallel to this *sugya*, one finds explicit distinctions between seeing idolatry as it implicates Jews and gentiles.¹¹² It is only in the Babylonian Talmud that the liturgical formula includes the hope that gentiles will ultimately convert, rather than merely repent, arguably pointing to a greater investment of diaspora rabbis in the fate of their gentile neighbors. In this case, we see how the notion of idolatry – in its biblical contexts, a mostly Israel-related matter – travels, and allows, through the medium of liturgical looking, an almost imperialist gaze

¹⁰⁹ I hasten to add that while the upsurge of Christian pilgrimage starting in the fourth century helps us understand these itineraries better, I do not view these texts as direct “responses” or “polemic.” Rather, I see them as participating in a wider discursive sphere, albeit without directly declaring themselves, and to the extent that Christianity was now armed with imperial resources, we might usefully view these sources as “hidden transcripts” in which those who are dominated resist in subtle, implicit ways. See Scott, *Domination*.

¹¹⁰ On the material and textual evidence, see Belayche, *Iudaea-Palaestina*; Caseau, “Sacred landscape,” 30. On Christian destruction of pagan cult images and spaces, see Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 3.26–28, and Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5. For a rabbinic narrative about *spolia*, see *b. 'Avodah Zarah* 50a–b. For biblical curses to be recited upon “passing in front of a house of idolatry,” as well as upon “seeing them sacrificing to idolatry” (as per the fourth-century Amora R. Yose b. Abban), see *y. Berakhot* 9:1, 13b. On reciting, “Blessed is the one who is slow to anger” when “one sees *mercurius*,” see *y. Berakhot* 9:1, 13d and *b. Berakhot* 54b.

¹¹¹ This is a central biblical goal for the land of Israel; see, e.g., Exodus 23:24; Numbers 33:52; Deuteronomy 7, 12, 20.

¹¹² *B. Berakhot* 57b.

upon Babylonian gentiles. Here the gaze seeks a different kind of mastery beyond the resistance projected in the Palestinian gaze.

In pointing to the dissimilarity here between Palestinian and Babylonian ways of looking at idols, two further differences bear mention. First, the Tannaitic teaching “Do not turn towards images to look at them” appears in the Bavli in the context of the Sabbath (as it does in the Tosefta):¹¹³

Our Rabbis taught: “One may not read the writing under a figure or an image on the Sabbath. As for the image itself, one must not look at it even on weekdays, as it says, “Do not turn toward the idols” (Leviticus 19:4). What is the teaching? R. Hanin said, “Do not turn towards (*al tifnu el*) that of your own minds.”¹¹⁴

There are two ways of understanding R. Hanin’s reading of, “Do not turn towards (*al tifnu el*).” Either he reads it as, “Do not turn toward that of your own minds,” *al tifnu el* (toward) *mida’atkhem* (your minds);¹¹⁵ or he reads it as, “Do not empty God from your minds,” *al tefannu el mida’atkhem*.¹¹⁶ Both understandings of R. Hanin’s statement imply that the Amora emphasized the mental aspect of idolatry. This aligns with a related trend in the Babylonian sources, in which God was to be visualized during prayer.¹¹⁷

While in the Bavli Amoraim move to abstraction when it comes to “turning toward” idolatry in Leviticus 19:4, there is a contrasting shift when it comes to “blinding its eye.” Thus Samuel instructs Rav Judah, who has a seal with a protruding image on it, to “blind its eye,” that is, to deface the image, thereby “nullifying” it, and making it permissible for use.¹¹⁸ Observing patterns of rabbinic encounters with idols in the Babylonian Talmud, Richard Kalmin has shown that Palestinian rabbis

¹¹³ Note that this *baraita* resurfaces after a discussion about not looking at a mirror on the Sabbath (cf. *t. Shabbat* 13:16).

¹¹⁴ *B. Shabbat* 149a. R. Judah’s interpretation is anonymous and alone, without the other opinion of “Do not turn toward idols to worship them,” as in *t. Shabbat* 17:1. It also has, “One may not read the writing” instead of, “One may not look at the writing.” The uneasy contrast presented in the Tosefta becomes legible as a *qal vahomer* argument about reading and looking on the Sabbath and at other times. Munich 95 and Soncino have R. Hanin whereas Vat. 108 omits entirely, leaving the interpretation unattributed. Oxford Opp. Add. fol. 23 has “R. Yoḥanan.”

¹¹⁵ See Rashi ad loc. s.v. *al tifnu*.

¹¹⁶ See Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed* 3:51, and Lieberman, *Tosefta kifshutah*, III:283.

¹¹⁷ This trend toward interiorization and visualization has been noted by Wolfson, “Iconic visualization.”

¹¹⁸ *B. ‘Avodah Zarah* 43b (paralleled in *b. Rosh Hashanah* 24b). This is in the context of idolatry; however, see *b. ‘Avodah Zarah* 30a in which Rabbah b. Rav Huna uses the phrase to warn his servant when he sees a snake making its way toward the wine. The servant then adds water to the wine, which causes the snake to retreat because apparently it will not risk itself for diluted wine! What may be a related expression, usually directed at Satan, is “an arrow in your/his eye”; see

seem to have encountered them more commonly than Babylonian rabbis and that this would have been more likely given the environments in which each group found themselves.¹¹⁹ Kalmin even argues that idols were an object of fascination and theoretical interest for Babylonian rabbis rather than actual objects that they needed to confront. Certainly, the surfacing of “blinding the eye” in the context of idolatry in Babylonia relates to Babylonian rabbis and is literal and iconoclastic.¹²⁰ Yet, an interesting twist in this case is that the rabbis speak not of an idolatrous image owned by a gentile, but rather of one owned by a rabbi.¹²¹

All in all, we can see that the concerns that surface in the Yerushalmi are, aside from these parallels, not at play in the Bavli. The parallels themselves point to very different contexts that do not seem to reflect a particular concern for “mystic viewing” and its negation. This is perhaps surprising, given the Bavli’s intensely cultic conception of gazing at God in temple times. Until we know more about the gaze, its deployment in ritual matters, and its relation to sacred images in Sassanian Persia, or indeed, more about whether these are the correct contexts for assessing Babylonian idol-visibility, it is difficult to know why the Palestinian concerns do not surface in Babylonia. At the same time, the Bavli’s relative lack of engagement with the visibility of idolatry (beyond iconoclasm and mental idolatry) comports with its lack of anxiety about the cherubim that we noted in Chapter 2, especially as compared with Palestinian texts. We can even speculate that the relative lack of interest in a reciprocal visibility in Palestinian sources stems from a wariness of the sacred viewing associated with idolatrous image cults. Put differently, the Bavli worries more about visual eros, whether divine or feminine, than it does about the visual impact of idolatry. By comparison, the Yerushalmi worries more about idols.

Conclusion: vision and power

[W]e entered the temple. In the midst thereof sits the goddess – she’s a most beautiful statue of Parian marble – arrogantly smiling a little as a

b. Sukkah 38a; *b. Qiddushin* 30a, 81a; *b. Menahot* 62a. The use of eye in this context seems related to negating the evil eye.

¹¹⁹ Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*, 103–20.

¹²⁰ Kalmin’s understanding of the Babylonian rabbinic environment as relatively “idol-free” due to Zoroastrian iconoclasm may be relevant to the Babylonian iconoclastic impulse.

¹²¹ On a “Jewish” idol, see *b. Sanhedrin* 103b on Manasseh’s idolatrous image. The printed version and manuscripts read, “At first he made it with one face and in the end he made it with four faces so that the *shekhinah* would see it and be angry,” Yad Harav Herzog 1 has, “At first he made [an image with] one face (*parzuf*) and in the end he made an image with four faces, for he said, ‘the *shekhinah* will see (*tir’eh*) from all directions, and be angry.’”

grin parts her lips. Draped by no garment, all her beauty is uncovered and revealed, except in so far as she unobtrusively uses one hand to hide her private parts. So great was the power of the craftsman's art that the hard unyielding marble did justice to every limb . . . The temple had a door on both sides for the benefit of those also who wish to have a good view of the goddess from behind, so that no part of her be left unadmired. It's easy therefore for people to enter by the other door and survey the beauty of her back. And so we decided to see all of the goddess and went round to the back of the precinct. Then, when the door had been opened by the woman responsible for keeping the keys, we were filled with an immediate wonder for the beauty we beheld.¹²²

The legendary Aphrodite of Knidos by Praxiteles (*ca.* 350 BCE) was the source of many copies throughout the Roman world. Here Pseudo-Lucian's Lycinus casts a lingering gaze over her limbs. Aphrodite's marbled and marvelous body is exposed to the viewer's eyes not only by virtue of her nudity, which is in fact highlighted in the "modest Venus" pose, but also by the architecture of her display. In her material form, the goddess of desire becomes an object of desire, stimulating the worship of the eyes, if not more.

Is Aphrodite a rabbinic object? In the Mishnah, edited roughly a hundred years before Pseudo-Lucian wrote the *Erotes* (though its date is debated), a variation of this question is posed to Rabban Gamliel in Acco, about 360 miles, as the crow flies, northwest of Knidos:

Paraclos, the son of Pelaslos questioned Rabban Gamliel in Acco while he was bathing in the Bath of Aphrodite. He said to him: "It is written in your Torah, 'Let none of the proscribed things stick to your hand' (Deuteronomy 13:18.) Why are you bathing in the Bath of Aphrodite?" He said to him: "One may not answer in the bathhouse," and when he came out, he said: "I did not come into her domain, she came into my domain. They do not say, 'Let us make a bath for Aphrodite,' but, 'Let us make an Aphrodite as an adornment for the bath.' Furthermore, if you were given a large sum of money, would you enter the presence of your idol while you were naked or had a seminal emission, and would you urinate before her? But this one stands by a sewer and all people urinate before her!

It only says [in the Torah], 'Their gods' (Deuteronomy 12:3) – [that is,] what is treated as a god is prohibited; what is not treated as a god is permitted."¹²³

¹²² Pseudo-Lucian, *Erotes* 13 (in Lucian, *Lucian*, vol. VIII, trans. McLeod, 171).

¹²³ *M. 'Avodah Zarah* 3:4 (vocalized according to Ms. Kaufman). See Halbertal, "Coexisting"; Schwartz, "Aphrodite's bath"; Yadin, "Rabban Gamliel."

This layered response applies a curious blend of rabbinic and Roman conceptions of the sacred to deny cultic status to this particular Aphrodite statue in the context of the bathhouse (whereas, in fact the contrasts between the ornamental, the profane, and the divine would not have been so sharply drawn in Roman religious practice). The Acco Aphrodite is an image (an “ornament”), but she is not an idol. The answers follow a logic by which an image becomes an “idol” and is thus “forbidden” only when it is “worshipped” as such (*m. ‘Avodah Zarah* 3:1). One could therefore argue that once an object has been designated as an idol, it has been rabbinized, or made Jewish in some sense, precisely by the manner in which it has been excluded. The very terms of its designation subordinate it to a category that simultaneously and paradoxically insists on its sanctity (“what is treated as a god”), even as it regards it in opposite terms (“prohibited”).¹²⁴

We have argued that how one saw in antiquity was bound up with self-definition. Sight was a crucial mode through which to engage, negotiate, and also enact imperial power.¹²⁵ The oft-told tale of Rabban Gamliel in Aphrodite’s bathhouse does not deploy vision explicitly, though it does so implicitly through the aesthetic category of *noy* (“ornament”). Nonetheless, it serves as a general example of how rabbis “look back” at symbols of Roman culture and how, by filtering these objects through the lens of the halakhically permitted or forbidden, they rabbinize them. But there are different approaches to “idols,” as we have seen throughout this chapter. Does one wander around this “world full of idols”? Does one go to Aphrodite’s bathhouse with one’s eyes open? Or does one walk around with eyes to the ground, or better still, stay at home? The *Didascalia*, for example, enjoins the good Christian,

Do not roam and go about idly the streets and see the empty spectacle of those who behave themselves evilly . . . But persevere in your craft and work, look for and be willing to do those things that are pleasing to God; and you shall be constantly meditating upon the words of the Lord. And if you are rich and have no need of a craft in order to live, do not roam and go about vainly, but be ever constant in coming near to the faithful . . . Sit at home and read the law.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Think of the Brooklyn restaurant, opened in 2010, that signals simultaneously its Jewishness and its ostensible lack thereof, by its name, “Traif.”

¹²⁵ Goldhill, “Erotic eye”; Jacobs, *Remains*.

¹²⁶ *Didascalia Apostolorum* 2 (trans. Vööbus, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, vol. 1, 14, ed. Vööbus, 17). The *Didascalia* is thought to have originated in the third century CE. Scholars date the Syriac translation to between the mid-fourth and early sixth centuries. See Marcus, “Testaments,” and Fonrobert, “*Didascalia Apostolorum*.”

Conversely, the *Didascalia* recommends that people ought to be regulars at church just as the pagans are regulars in their worship of idols.¹²⁷ Thus, the Christian is taught to go about modestly, eyes averted from the ubiquitous sights, spectacles, and gatherings of the rest of the world, keeping God's words in their sights.

Patterning safe spaces in a "world full of idols" was a task that preoccupied early Christian leaders.¹²⁸ To put it differently, this preoccupation, crucial to the very formation of Christian community and identity, motivated the making of a map to help believers navigate their way through the thicket of false leads and tempting sights of the pagan city. Tertullian, the *Didascalia*, Clement of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, and others sought to shape the movement and sensory deportment of Christians and to form Christian bodies.¹²⁹ Of course, Christian visual strategies, together with a variety of ritual, performative, and discursive practices, such as sacred travel and concomitant writings, changed when after the fourth century imperial might and money helped to ensure that the viewscape itself could be reconstructed.

The rabbis' preoccupation with idolatry was of biblical derivation, and the rabbis emphatically maintained their ancient and biblical links to the land of Israel. The Bible's iconoclastic discourse is itself linked to narratives of conquest and ethnic identity, concerns that were enlivened by and useful to rabbis, and perhaps less so to Christians before Constantine, at least.¹³⁰ If post-Constantinian Christians cast an imperial gaze on the Holy Land and viewed Jews in very specific ways, then so too did rabbis, before and after Constantine, learn to gaze back at empire, or, sometimes, as we have seen, to look away.

However, where Christians would eventually have the chance to practice physical iconoclasm, and to write about it triumphantly, the Palestinian rabbis would not. In some ways, the most idealized visual strategy of dealing with unwanted, idolatrous sight was gaze aversion. There were also several

¹²⁷ *Didascalia* 13: "And in comparison to those that make err, what excuse have you? For, indeed, the pagans, when they rise from their sleep every day, go in the morning to worship and serve their idols, and before all their works and doings they go first and worship their idols . . . And so (do) in like manner those who are vainly called Jews . . . Thus, endeavor never to withdraw yourself from the assembly of the church . . . and that we should utterly keep (ourselves away) from the theater, and from their feasts on account of their idols" (trans. Vööbus, vol. 11, 136–49). *Didascalia* 18 also prohibits churches from accepting gifts from "painters of pictures and makers of idols" (trans. Vööbus, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, vol. 11, 163). See also Basil, *Homilia VI*, on Luke 12:18.

¹²⁸ See Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 8.

¹²⁹ See Augustine, *Epistulae* 153. See Goldhill, "Erotic eye," and Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 285–88, on resistance, viewing, and art in the Roman East.

¹³⁰ Though, see Buell, *Why This New Race*.

types of deliberately defiant looking at idols: looking in which the idol's status is compromised; a disrespectful gaze that "blinds the eye" of the idol; and a liturgical look. This liturgical gaze is supposed to eliminate idols, ultimately, and quite completely, from the land. In both the Bavli and the Yerushalmi, liturgical longing for divine iconoclasm also comes with prayers for their gentile worshippers. Thus we have come full circle, from the notion that to look at an idol is to worship it, to the notion that to look at an idol is to denigrate or even destroy it. This made sense in a world in which vision itself was understood to affect or even effect its object.

If the choice not to look at the idol was, as I hope I have shown, indebted to an understanding not just of its effects on the viewer, but of the "mystical viewing" at the heart of image cult, then it turns out that looking at the idol could be a way of ignoring it by denying its power. Either way, these modes of viewing were to mark the viewer, and perhaps even the idol, as I've suggested above, in distinctively rabbinic ways. If what unites gaze aversion with the more aggressive types of looking is a rabbinic lens on the world, that is, an attempt to control one's landscape visually even if one could not do so materially, then another difficulty was surely the ambiguity of images' identities.

The archaeological record of late antiquity makes it clear that people, in places such as Sepphoris, Scythopolis, Beth Shean, or Caesarea, encountered a variety of images in their daily lives, from statues to mosaics to more modest images on domestic objects, such as oil lamps.¹³¹ Jaś Elsner has argued that our contemporary impulse to designate images one way or another (as Jewish, Christian, or pagan) is beset with problems and does a certain violence to the complexity and fluidity of the way objects appeared and functioned for their contemporaneous viewers and users.¹³² Just such fluidity enables Rabban Gamliel to enjoy not only the bathhouse but the beauty (*noy*) of Aphrodite herself.

But such ambiguity of material objects must also have made even more vivid the urgency of some ancients', including rabbis', desires to render their world intelligible and safe. The story of Rabban Gamliel narrates and resolves just such a moment of potential ambiguity by making a classification. In a basic sense, the project of thinking through *'avodah zarah* was part of an attempt to control the environment, at the very least on epistemic and ontic levels, if not on physical and material ones. If the Rabban Gamliel story resolves conflict with idolatry by classifying

¹³¹ See Fischer, *Marble Studies*; Lapp, "Lamps."

¹³² Elsner, "Archaeologies and agendas."

Aphrodite as no idol in those particular circumstances, then so too does the very designation of an object as an “idol,” even if under the veil of prohibition. Thus, a statue of Aphrodite might be the quintessential “idol,” if worshipped by rabbinic standards, but even then, she is rabbinic. On the other end of the visual equation, the viewer, in this case the rabbi, *becomes* more and more of a rabbi by seeing (or not seeing) like a rabbi (rather than, in the imperial context, like a state).¹³³ This is, in part, how we might understand the later valorization and honorific sanctification of visual virtuosos such as R. Naḥum bar Sima’y. If one became a holy rabbi by not looking, even as the refusal to look, as we have argued, was also framed in line with cultic understandings of vision, so too did one become a rabbi by gazing aggressively at idols.

Idols were both like other troubling visual objects – women, for example – and also particular problems (as aspiring representations of divinity). In this regard, they pressed more directly on what it meant to have Jewish eyes (rather than the specifically rabbinic, presumptively masculine, eyes that decided how to look at a woman). The responses were inevitably wider than those recommended in the case of women, and the problems of averting the gaze were different, too.¹³⁴ The power of vision, though, is clear in both cases. Seeing an idol could have significant impact on the viewer; but the more empowering possibility of looking askance or liturgically at an idol endowed the viewer with a potent gaze in return. It is in this sense that (not) looking at idols was a way to control and resist the “foreign” in “foreign worship.”

¹³³ Paraphrasing Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

¹³⁴ Ideally, all idols were to be eliminated. This does not seem to have been the ultimate goal with respect to sexually tempting women, except for the rabbi in *b. Ta’anit* 24a. The rabbis do not seem to contemplate a defiant gaze being cast at women, though they do seem to find that seeing women as animals neutralizes their danger. Recall Rav Gidol’s claims that his evil inclination is not aroused while correcting women at their *mique* ablutions because he sees them as geese (*b. Berakhot* 20a) as well as the comparison between blessing a beautiful woman to blessing a beautiful camel, horse, or donkey (*y. Berakhot* 9:1, 13b–c; *y. Avodah Zarah* 1:8, 40a–b).

CHAPTER SIX

Seeing sages

On seeing these . . . , Paula rejoiced in the Lord's glory; but protested that she had no claim to be received with such honor. Need I speak of the Macarii, Arsenius, Serapion, or other pillars of Christ! Was there any cell that she did not enter? Or any man at whose feet she did not throw herself? In each of his saints she believed that she saw Christ himself.

Jerome, *Epistula* 108.14¹

Arresting eyes, beaming bodies, fabulous faces: these are not necessarily the terms in which we think of the rabbis of late antiquity. Rabbinic sources go into little detail about the appearances of particular rabbis – perhaps the allusive *ekphrasis* of R. Yoḥanan in *b. Bava Metsi'a* 84a is the closest thing we have to a verbal rabbinic portrait.² However, this does not mean that the visibility of rabbis was unimportant to the authors and framers of rabbinic texts. In fact, rabbinic sources, particularly post-Tannaitic writings, contemplate faces that brighten, darken, and blush; eyes that transmit anger, joy, and even death; and bodies that were recognizably rabbinic. In the coming pages, we investigate some of the ways in which late-antique rabbis tried to see themselves as, and make themselves into, icons of the sacred.

In the blurring together of seer and visual object that undergirded late-antique notions of vision, to see was all too easily to be(come). This blurring of seer and seen was the case for good visual objects as well as bad. A person could cultivate worthy, benevolent, and even beneficent objects of vision,

¹ Ed. Hilberg, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, vol. 11, 324; trans. Fremantle, in Schaff and Wace (eds.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. vi, 202, with modifications.

² Though see, e.g., the story in *b. 'Avodah Zarah* 18b, in which Romans “engraved R. Me’ir’s image (*haqqegu lidmuteh*) on the gates of Rome and said that anyone seeing this face (*dehaze lepartsufa haden*) should bring him there”; *b. Bava Metsi'a* 84a on R. Zeira’s appearance; *b. Shabbat* 34a on R. Shim’on b. Yoḥay’s scarred body.

and thereby cultivate those qualities in herself. Positive visual objects could include particular human beings, and rabbinic sages in particular.³

Most of the materials that emphasize the positive effects of looking at the sage are found in post-Tannaitic collections, with a large concentration in the Palestinian Talmud. Such developments dovetail with an increasing desire in the fourth century (not coincidentally at a time when the Roman empire became Christian), for *praesentia*, “the physical presence of the holy.”⁴ This was manifested in the cult of the saints, with attendant fascinations with the relics, tombs, and, eventually, images of the holy dead.⁵ At the same time, ritual practices grew up around the sight and body of the “living holy,” those persons who exuded the divine while still alive.⁶ This search for corporeal and material manifestations of the sacred, perceived by the human eye, occurred in no small measure in Palestine, which was fast becoming the Christian Holy Land. Jerome’s emphasis on the visibility at play in Paula’s visits to holy men provides a powerful example. As we suggested in the previous chapter, this Christian visual turn must have been registered by Palestinian rabbinic eyes. Others have already noted that this visual turn, and also the turn toward visible holy men, was not a Christian invention. While forms of Christian piety in the Mediterranean and the Near East were reconstituted by the advent of Christian imperial power, the rabbis did not passively watch but were active participants in this trend.⁷

³ I use the terms “rabbinic sage,” “sage,” and “rabbi” as generic designations for rabbis. The terms “Rabbi” and “Rav” are honorific titles (meaning, “my master” or “master”) used by rabbinic disciples in addressing or referring to their teacher, or as a mark of respect between rabbinic colleagues; rabbinic texts follow these conventional usages. On the lack of official ordination qualifying one for the title “rabbi,” see Hezser, *Social Structure*, 79–93. In Tannaitic sources, the rabbis tend to refer to themselves as a collectivity of “sages,” *hakhamim*. In later sources, rabbis also refer to themselves as “the rabbis.” See Hezser, *Social Structure*, 130–37, who notes that the precise meaning of *hakham* is not stable.

⁴ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 88.

⁵ Brown, “Holy men.” See also Brown, “Rise and function”; Brown, *Society and the Holy*; Brown, *Cult of the Saint*; Fowden, “Pagan holy man”; Kirschner, “Vocation of holiness.”

⁶ Brown, *Society and the Holy*, 185, 272–73. See also 251–301, in which Brown makes the link between the rise of the holy man, the cult of saints and relics, and the production and use of icons. Brown refers to the holy man himself as a “living icon” and a “clearly-defined locus of the holy on earth,” who allowed laypersons to access the holy in this world (Brown, *Society and the Holy*, 268).

⁷ While these visual pieties did not spring up in a vacuum, they do seem to have enjoyed a particularly intense revival and reconfiguration from the fourth century onward, in part because of the confluence of power, politics, and religion that came as the Roman empire incorporated Christianity. Scholars have drawn attention to these kinds of phenomena in second- and third-century Greek and Roman philosophical and polytheist (or “pagan”) sources. Two excellent treatments are Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, and Fowden “Pagan holy man.”

I will argue that, in different ways and to differing extents, the rabbis of Palestine and Babylonia sought to make the figure of the sage into an icon.⁸ The relationship between visual piety – in the words of Georgia Frank, those “practices in which a lingering gaze conjures a sacred presence” – and a human icon of the sacred is crucial.⁹ In other words, certain practices of looking could generate or transform visual objects; in this way, rabbis could be transformed into “icons.”

Our investigation proceeds as follows: We will begin by examining the basic idea, found in different measure and kind in both Babylonian and Palestinian sources, that the body of the rabbinic sage radiates a light that transmits knowledge to the viewer. Such an emission is founded in the connection between (divine) revelation, light, and sight (the last two were understood as intertwined in antiquity).¹⁰ This connection, when mapped onto the sage, ultimately makes “receiving the face” of the sage the equivalent to “receiving the face” of the *shekhinah*.¹¹ The association of sight and divine revelation is further enhanced, we will see, by the incorporation of sight in processes of study and memory.

Given that so much stock was put in the sight of the sage, we will examine rabbinic claims about the visibility of the sages’ own wisdom, as well as their ability to recognize it. We shall see that both claims were crucial tools of group formation. We then move to a rabbinic meditation on sagely visibility, recognition, and veneration on the part of representatives of the Roman empire. Finally, we will look at intra-rabbinic visual veneration of the sage.

⁸ I am not making a claim about Christian influence on rabbinic practices of piety; see Satlow, “Beyond influence.” I argue that rabbinic and Christian writings point to the same discursive universe. While, in certain respects, the Christian holy man and the rabbinic icon do not map onto each other neatly, they nonetheless have important features in common, particularly in drawing upon their visibility to human eyes. Whether as alternatives to the church (on the fringes of the city) or in the person of bishops, holy men functioned as channels of the holy for laypersons, thus doing a very different kind of socio-political work than the rabbinic icon, which mostly seems to function for intra-rabbinic sociality.

⁹ Frank, *Memory*, 174. Perhaps a slightly more accurate term for what I am getting at would be “visual rituals” or “visual practices.” What piety conveys, however, at least according to Frank’s definition, is the deployment of such “visual practices” in the realm of the sacred. Perhaps the use of the term “piety” (*pietas*), with its meanings of affect, attitude, attribute, virtue, and quality, is not entirely accurate, at least for our purposes. The term itself is hardly a stable one, being related to family, gods, and the Roman state; see Garrison, *Pietas*, 43–50, who argues that a conduct-based understanding of piety surfaces as late as Erasmus. I do not use “visual piety” to refer specifically to ways of deploying *images* for religious purposes. Likewise, my use of the term “icon” refers to a sanctified object of vision rather than a material artifact or image per se.

¹⁰ Wade, “Light and sight.” One might think of the luminosity of certain figures as signaling their hypervisibility.

¹¹ See *y. Eruvin* 5:1, 22b (paralleled in *y. Sanhedrin* 11:3, 30b); and, in general, see *m. Avot* 4:12.

Flashes of revelation: sage-spotting

Let us begin by sketching the basic features of the sage icon. Christian holy persons were often seen as angelic, as biblical characters, or as manifestations of scripture; occasionally they were seen as icons of Christ, as we see in Jerome's depiction of Paula's pilgrimage to various holy men.¹² Their holiness could also be made manifest by signs of their ascetic toil or their lack of concern for their bodies or clothing. The rabbinic sage's visibility, on the other hand, is directly linked to God or, often, to the Torah and Torah knowledge.

In *y. Betsah* 5:2, 63a, the sage's visibility has divine overtones, while also expressing tensions among rabbis or between rabbis and the patriarchate. Here is the anecdote in full:

Rabbi [Judah the Patriarch] was marrying off R. Shim'on his son, and they were clapping with the backs of their hands on the Sabbath. R. Me'ir happened by and heard the noise. He said, "Gentlemen, is [this] permitted on the Sabbath?"

Rabbi heard his voice and said, "Who is this one who has come to chastise us in our own home?" [. . .]¹³ R. Me'ir heard his voice and fled. They went out and hastened after him. The wind picked up his [R. Me'ir's] scarf from around his neck. Rabbi was looking out of the window and saw Rabbi Me'ir's neck from behind. He said, "I only had the merit of Torah (*orayta*) because I saw R. Me'ir's neck from the behind."

R. Yoḥanan and R. Shim'on b. Laqish both said, "We only had the merit of Torah because we saw the toes of Rabbi [reaching] out of his shoes".¹⁴

This is a curious narrative with which to announce what can be gained in seeing the sage.¹⁵ The underlying *mishnah* to which this pericope is

¹² Pachomius vividly describes this potential for vision: "He who in my view is a sinner is not to ask of God to see visions. For without God's will, visions are misleading. . . . hear now about a great vision: it is a great vision to see a pure and humble man. For what is a greater vision than to see the invisible God in the visible man who is his temple." See Pachomius, *Vita Prima Graeca* 48 (trans. Athanassakis), 71 (Greek text on 70). See Burrows, "Visibility"; Frank, *Memory*, 55–63, 99–101, 163–70.

¹³ "And another one says that he said as follows: 'Who is this one who has come to restrict us (*l'essanne'enu*) in our own home?'"

¹⁴ On this pericope, see Baumgarten, "Rabbi Judah I," and Hezser, *Social Structure*, 431–33. Baumgarten views this as an example of rabbinic conflict with the patriarchate.

¹⁵ The narrative features the later Tannaim and the first transitional generation of Amoraim and is almost entirely in Aramaic. It is introduced following a debate between the Amora R. Yonah and the sages about the permissibility of clapping one's hands on the Sabbath. Hezser, *Social Structure*, 431, apparently views (only) the second part of the pericope as Amoraic and the first part as a genuine Tannaic tale. Both she and Baumgarten see Rabbi's declaration as a later addition to the kernel story. Perhaps this is so, but it becomes integral to the Talmudic version of the story rather than

attached concerns the permissibility of certain activities on the Sabbath, including clapping. While clapping in the regular fashion may have been forbidden, it is precisely Rabbi Me'ir's inability to see that those inside are clapping in an unusual fashion (he only hears, we presume) that allows him to conclude that they are transgressing. Rabbi, who is sitting at his son's wedding party with family and followers, and R. Me'ir, who is outside, have a face-off that escalates through the walls separating them.¹⁶

Rabbi's authority is affronted and his ego is wounded by Rabbi Me'ir's reprimand.¹⁷ He draws upon his status as patriarch to intimidate and shame Rabbi Me'ir, the elder in years, in order to restore his own dignity.¹⁸ Not only is Rabbi Me'ir forced to flee from Rabbi's henchmen, but in the flurry his nape is exposed. This exposure to Rabbi's watching eyes is revelatory. Rabbi moves from anger and aggression to humility and admiration, and the impact of this crowning moment is expressed in his apotheism.

This turnaround is framed in emphatically visual terms. Rabbi "looked out of the window (*odiq rabbi min kavveta*)"; he "sees" (*hama*) Rabbi Me'ir's nape. His declaration, the narrative's summarizing statement or coda, "I only had the merit of learning Torah (*orayta*) because I saw

functioning as a later appendix or afterthought. Baumgarten's and Hezser's interpretations derive from the idea that two components, Rabbi's initial hostility and Rabbi's praise, are inexplicable in narrative terms; however, even if we accept that Rabbi's statement is unrelated and is merely tacked on to serve as an ideological recasting, this in itself is informative about editorial strategies. In any event, on my reading, Rabbi's declaration is in fact utterly appropriate, even if stitched together by a later editor: The revelatory moment that is mind-changing and expanding for Rabbi is in fact the seeing of R. Me'ir's nape. The dramatic force of this revelation (or exposure) is heightened by what precedes it; Rabbi is stopped short and turned around by what he sees. It is not that we have two narratives where the second is "an apotheism in which Rabbi took the view of the neck of R. Me'ir as an occasion for his praise" (Hezser, *Social Structure*, 431). It is the very view of that which is not ordinarily exposed that leads Rabbi to his unexpected realization. His ensuing declaration needs to be read literally as describing an embodied experience in which knowledge is transmitted (perhaps even R. Me'ir's very position on clapping on the Sabbath). The oddity or the unexpected nature of this "teaching moment" is the very point of the story, not the thing in need of neutralization. On the problems within this story, i.e. the chronologies of Rabbi and Rabbi Me'ir, see Baumgarten, "Rabbi Judah I," 158.

¹⁶ I do not view this narrative solely in terms of rabbinic-patriarchal conflict because of the halakhic and Torah teaching context and also because the addition of R. Yoḥanan and R. Shim'on b. Laqish's statements situates the story in a context of visual transmission of Torah through three rabbinic generations.

¹⁷ On the patriarchate, see Levine, "Status."

¹⁸ Jeffrey Rubenstein analyzes Babylonian reworkings of Palestinian tales and argues that shame is of particular concern to the Babylonian sages. See Rubenstein, *Culture*, 67–70, esp. 70: "The Babylonian Talmud's emphasis on shame ultimately relates to important aspects of Babylonian life: *Many of the sources that deal with shame pertain directly to the academy or to relations between sages*," and 79: "What we do not find in the Palestinian Talmud is the theme of shame *in an academic setting*" (emphases in original). He sees this as a particular concern of the late (or Stammaitic) Babylonian academy. See also Rubenstein, *Stories*, 14–40. However, Schwartz, *Mediterranean Society*?, 150–51, demonstrates that this is also a Palestinian problem.

(*dehamit*) R. Me'ir's neck from behind," conveys a visual revelation. The passage is replete with visual wordplay: Though *orayta* is the common Aramaic word for Torah ("teaching"), it also puns on the Hebrew word *or* ("light"), and *me'ir* itself means "one who illuminates, or enlightens." The statement goes so far as to attribute Rabbi's entire achievement in Torah knowledge solely to his having *seen* R. Me'ir's nape.¹⁹ It is crucial not only that the sight of Torah is visible on the body of the sage but that the vision is transmitted to the viewer, who then comes to "merit" Torah knowledge (which, it seems, is beyond words). This visual transmission is efficacious and is, in turn, (visually) transmitted to, reinforced by, and duplicated through Rabbi's own students, R. Yoḥanan and R. Shim'on b. Laqish, who attribute all their own Torah to the inadvertent glimpse of Rabbi's toes. We have moved downwards in the sagely body, from nape to toes, from generation to generation.²⁰

How to understand the notion that seeing a part of a person's body can cause one to merit Torah? And why is it seeing R. Me'ir's nape, of all body parts, that guarantees Rabbi's Torah knowledge (*tout court*)? The nape, both underneath and supporting the head and behind the face, is a strange place for Torah to reside. The same is true of the toes. These are not the expected, frontal, focal points; these are not the radiant faces or flashing eyes of Moses after the revelation at Sinai.²¹ There is a poignancy in the master revealing, unintentionally, a kind of knowledge (perhaps an esoteric teaching) usually hidden and concealed.²² Here, Torah is visually transmitted in just such modest (or immodest) slippages and exposures, again, in contrast to the

¹⁹ On R. Meir's luminosity, see Hasan-Rokem, "Rabbi Meir, the illuminated and the illuminating"; Hasan-Rokem, "Rabbi Meir, may his lamp shine."

²⁰ The subsequent statement of R. Yoḥanan and Resh Laqish makes for yet another kind of ocular and mimetic tradition, as R. Me'ir transmits this hidden, esoteric knowledge to Rabbi, who in turn *inadvertently* (or so it seems) passes it on to his students. The story's doubling of transmission (two generations of sages) marks its exemplary value (a feature of such tales of mimetic traditions of at least two generations, a literary device telling us more about the authors than the putative protagonists). This form of double or triple-generational mimetic tradition is also found in the stories of rabbi-students viewing their teachers' bodies and bodily practices. In *y. Berakhot* 9:5, 14c (paralleled in *b. Berakhot* 62a; *b. Hagigah* 4b) a similar chain of two generations of Tannaim (R. Joshua and R. 'Aqiva; R. 'Aqiva and Shim'on b. 'Azzai) has students recounting that they followed their teachers to "see the deed," i.e. to observe them defecating, and upon being asked "What did you see?" describing what they learned. The Babylonian parallel adds a third story featuring Rav Kahana hiding under his master Rav's bed to learn about intercourse. However, it removes the visual language and also challenges the students' obsessive observation as brazen-faced, to which all three rabbis reply, "This is Torah and I must learn it." On going to *see* what sages do in order to learn halakhah, see also *b. 'Eruvin* 40b, in which Rav Yemar is told, "Go see how he [Rav Ḥisda] does the deed and then come tell us."

²¹ Exodus 34:35.

²² Thanks to Patricia Cox Miller for this suggestion.

grandeur of the monumental revelation exemplified by Sinai.²³ Despite, or because of, its ignominy, the biblical allusion here is to God's partial visual exposure to Moses' eyes; in Exodus 33:20, God flashes his "glory" to Moses' eyes by exposing his back or hind-parts. Likewise, Rabbi Me'ir is theophanic, even at his most embarrassing hour. Likewise, the vision of feet doubtlessly alludes to a curious moment of revelation at Sinai when Moses, Aaron, and Israelite elders saw God's feet (Exodus 24:9). We may speculate about the erotic undertones in both scenes that are at play in both biblical and rabbinic sources.²⁴

The *imago dei* invoked by R. Me'ir and Rabbi is in sharp contrast to that invoked in the Babylonian recasting of this story.²⁵ The latter is part of a top-down, frontal model of intra-rabbinic authority, which scholars have taught us to see as a reflection of the far more formalized institutions of late Babylonian sages. Such claims to and about authority among rabbis are found across rabbinic sources; however, in Palestinian sources that status quo is often presented in a context in which it is challenged, contested, or even denied. That is, sacredness and its visibility are, particularly in an intra-rabbinic context, a way to think about hierarchy and its problems in Palestinian sources. The rabbinic sage icon there expresses and mediates sociality in ways that are as often dynamic and complex as they are straightforwardly consolidating of intra-rabbinic hierarchy and sociality. Compare this to the Babylonian version:

- (1) R. Aḥa b. Ḥanina said, "It is revealed and known before the one who spoke and the world came into being, that in the generation of R. Me'ir there was none equal to him. Why was the halakhah not fixed in agreement with his views? Because his colleagues could not fully comprehend his reasoning,²⁶ for he would declare the ritually unclean to be clean and supply proof and the ritually clean to be unclean and also supply proof (*umar'eh lo panim*)."

²³ See Athanassiadi, *Julian*, 189–91, 206–7 in her discussion of "the anatomy of visible holiness" on the "aesthetic aspect of *paideia*." For another anecdote, arguably related to a rabbinized cult of relics, that features Rabbi Me'ir's material and visible transmission of knowledge, see *y. Nedarim* 9:1, 41b (paralleled in *y. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:1, 82a), in which an elder surprises people with his learning and claims that "the stick of Rabbi Me'ir was in my hand and it teaches me knowledge."

²⁴ See Barthes, *Pleasure*, 9–10, on eroticism as "intermittence" or "where the garment gapes," rather than the striptease. Thanks to Patricia Cox Miller for this insight. On the eroticism of divine exposures, see Wolfson, "Images of God's feet," and Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus*, 22, 38, 62–77.

²⁵ The visibility of the Christian holy man is also often cast in not entirely flattering terms. On the "scruffiness" of the "ascetic look," see Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 269–71. For more on the scruffiness of the rabbinic sage, see below, p. 223.

²⁶ Cf. *b. 'Eruvin* 53a, in which R. Yohanan compares R. Osha'yah to R. Me'ir in this regard.

- (2) It was taught in a *baraita*, “His name was not R. Me’ir but R. Nehora’y.²⁷ Then why was he called R. Me’ir? Because he enlightened the eyes of the sages in halakhah (*me’ir ‘ene ḥakhamim behalakhah*).²⁸ His name was not Nehora’y, but R. Nehemiah, or, as others say, R. Ele’azar b. Arakh. Then why was he called Nehora’y? Because he enlightened the eyes of the sages (*shemanhir ‘ene ḥakhamim*) in halakhah.”
- (3) Rabbi²⁹ declared, “The only reason I am sharper than my colleagues is that I saw (*deḥazita*) R. Me’ir from the back, but had I had seen him (*ḥaziteh*) from the front, I would have been sharper yet, for it is written, ‘And your eyes shall see (*‘enekha ro’ot*) your teacher’ (Isaiah 30:20).”³⁰

When reshaped in the Babylonian Talmud, the complexities in the Yerushalmi story are erased.³¹ In the Bavli, the narrative tension is dropped; all that is left is the observation that R. Me’ir was so brilliant that his colleagues misunderstood him, which explains why his legal opinions did not prevail.³² A paean to his luminous mind plays with the light conveyed by his very name: R. Me’ir (*me’ir*) is Rabbi Nehora’y (“illuminator”) who “enlightened the eyes (or faces) of the sages with *halakhah*.”³³ Following this comes a declaration from Rabbi: “The only reason I am sharper than my colleagues is that I saw R. Me’ir from the back, but had I had seen him

²⁷ Nehora’y, according to the Vilna and Venice editions.; Mayysha, according to Mss. Munich 95, Oxford Opp. Add. Fol. 23, Vatican 127; and Maya’sha, according to Ms. Vatican 109. However, these latter mss. refer to Nehora’y in the second and third mentions, i.e. “His name was not Nehora’y, but R. Nehemiah,” and “Why was he called Nehora’y?”).

²⁸ So according to the Vilna and Venice editions; other mss. have *me’ir pene ḥakhamim behalakhah*. This pattern persists with Nehora’y’s “enlightening” the faces (eyes) of the sages. This picks up on the “proof” (*mar’eh lo panim*) in (1).

²⁹ Rabbi, according to the Vilna edition; Rav, according to Ms. Munich 95 and Ms. Vatican 109; Rava, according to Ms. Oxford Opp. Add. Fol. 23; and Rabbah, according to Ms. Vatican 127.

³⁰ *B. ‘Eruvin* 13b. The *sugya* continues with praise for R. Me’ir’s student Symmachus, who could support cases of purity and impurity with forty-eight proofs (paralleled in *y. Sanhedrin* 4:1, 22a); see Rubenstein, *Culture*, 46.

³¹ *B. ‘Eruvin* 13b (paralleled in *b. Shabbat* 147b). See the analyses of Kraemer, *Reading the Rabbis*, 62–63, and Boyarin, *Fat Rabbis*, 274–77.

³² For an example of dialectical and logical sharpness being manifest as light, see Eunapius, *Vitae Sophistarum*: “But Eusebius, at least when Maximus was present, used to avoid precise and exact divisions of a disputation and dialectical devices and subtleties; though when Maximus was not there he would shine out like a bright star, with a light like the sun’s; such was the facility and charm that flowered in his discourses.” This caused Julian to “reverence” him (Eunapius and Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists*, trans. Wright, 432). Daniel Boyarin views this story in concert with the story of Moses in Rabbi Akiva’s classroom in *b. Menaḥot* 29b as playing out a conflict between dialectics and divination as methods for discovering the truth, which was part of the “shared cultural milieu” of Jewish and Christian Mesopotamia that allows us to speak of “Hellenism in Jewish Babylonia.” See Boyarin, “Hellenism,” 350.

³³ See *b. Berakhot* 17a for the blessing to be recited upon leaving the school of R. Hanina, which included, “May your eyelids look straight before you, may your eyes be enlightened by the light of the Torah, and your face shine like the brightness of the firmament.”

from the front, I would have been sharper yet, for it is written, 'And your eyes shall see your teacher' (Isaiah 30:20)."³⁴

Notice how the Babylonian Talmud has redeployed the Palestinian apothegm's valorization of the humble revelation of flesh in favor of a frontal, top-down transmission of knowledge, a manifestation of power and authority through its *qal vaḥomer* (*a fortiori*) argument. If one had seen R. Me'ir's face, he would be even sharper. The biblical citation reinforces this: The divine image invoked is not of God revealing his hind-parts to Moses, but of God as teacher. Dialectical sharpness, rather than merit and Torah, is valorized here. Furthermore, the sharpness is posed in competitive terms, in other words, in terms of Rabbi's (and R. Me'ir's) superiority over his colleagues.³⁵

Gone, as well, are the affective elements of the Palestinian story. Even as the transmitted material has been denuded of its content in the Babylonian retelling (from Torah knowledge to sharpness), so too has the visuality been shed of its earthy, humble, embodied materiality. A key difference in the Bavli's reconfiguration of the Palestinian narrative is its explicit thematization of light and sharpness.³⁶ Unlike the vision evoked by the Palestinian Talmud's narrative weave, by turns tactile (turbans, napes, slippers, toes) and touching (affecting, erotic, sacred), the Babylonian Talmud offers a far more removed, cerebral, and abstracted sense of sight, one which mirrors the formal ways in which the pericope abstracts the richer Palestinian narrative into didactic argument.³⁷ If the Palestinian narrative ultimately valorizes the sanctity that resides in the somewhat marginalized and peripheral, the Babylonian pericope restructures the informal, domestic, and urban spatial and visual layout of the Yerushalmi into the hierarchically organized space of the Babylonian study-house.³⁸ In other words, the very architectures of visuality and rank point to different degrees of formality of rabbinic institutions. While divinity is explicitly invoked to

³⁴ Boyarin follows Ms. Vatican, which reads Rav as opposed to Rabbi (Judah the Patriarch), because the latter "had certainly seen Rabbi Me'ir from 'in front' as well as from behind"; Boyarin, *Fat Rabbis*, 274. But had Rav even seen R. Meir from the back? Baumgarten "R. Judah I," 160 gives an interpretation that allows for this difficulty.

³⁵ For this particularly Babylonian estimation of sharpness as compared to Palestinian sources, see Rubenstein, *Culture*, 51.

³⁶ Rubenstein, *Culture*, 28, notes a similar transformation of the story about Ḥoni from a source of physical light (*y. Ta'anit* 3:8, 66d) into an illuminator of halakhah (religious law) (*b. Ta'anit* 23a).

³⁷ Cf. *B. Bava Metsi'a* 84a and the story of Rabbi Yohanan, who, as we have seen in Chapter 4, is a rabbinic icon of sorts who is suffused with eroticism.

³⁸ On the degrees to which the Tannaim, Amoraim, and Stammaim were institutionalized, and the different ways in which this was manifested in Palestine and Babylonia, see Rubenstein, "Social and institutional settings"; Schwartz, "Political geography"; Goodblatt, "History of the Babylonian academies." See also Gafni, "Talmudic history."

legitimate this Babylonian brilliance, the earthy sense of embodied sanctity, or even eroticism, of the Palestinian Talmud is not.

Sage as God, sage as Torah

The slippage between the sage as a divine figure and the sage as Torah incarnate is founded in the rabbis' claim of ultimate authority to interpret, teach, and transmit Torah. Such slippage between God and his Torah is also based in early rabbinic interpretations of the revelation of Sinai as a dual revelation of Torah and God. We have seen how the Yerushalmi made the link between divinity and Torah transferred to the figure of R. Me'ir.

Sages are often called "Torah" or "Sinai" or compared to a Torah ark.³⁹ The Yerushalmi even likens seeing the dead body of the sage to seeing a burned Torah scroll and prescribes mourning rituals accordingly.⁴⁰ An Amoraic Palestinian tradition holds that, "an elder (*zagen*) who has forgotten his learning through no fault of his own is treated with the sanctity (*qedushah*) of the ark."⁴¹ Like sages, Torah scrolls as containers of the word of God, and countless inscriptions of God's name, are ritually sacred objects, with appropriate laws regulating their handling, status, disposal, and veneration.

In Chapter 2 we saw how the Bavli equated "receiving the face of his master (*rabbo*)" with the pilgrimage ritual of seeing the face of God or the *shekhinah*.⁴² Such equivalences are not absent in Palestinian sources; for example, in one anecdote R. Yoḥanan reports a teaching (about the spelling of a *mishnah*) in the name of his teacher, R. Hosha'yah:

He raised his eyes (*talah 'ayyenoy*) and stared at him (*ve'istakkel beh*). He said to him, "Why are you staring (*mistakkel*) at me? If you need, you laugh; if you do not need, others have outdone you." For thirteen years he would enter before his teacher unnecessarily.

³⁹ See, e.g., *y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65c, for sage as Sinai. "Sinai" can have the more technical sense of someone who transmits earlier oral teachings, or a more purely reverential sense. See also *b. Makkot* 22b: "Rava [Ms. Jerusalem, Yad Harav Herzog 1: Abbaye] said, 'How foolish are all those who rise before a Torah scroll but fail to rise before a great man; for in the Torah it says forty [lashes], whereas the rabbis came and subtracted one.'"

⁴⁰ *Y. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:7, 83b: "One who sees a dead *talmid hakham* (disciple of a sage) is like one who sees a burnt Torah scroll" (paralleled in *b. Shabbat* 105b, in which this analogy is made of *any* dead person rather than the dead *sage* specifically). This teaching is embedded among laws of sight-triggered responses and rituals of mourning in response to loss, whether of one's teacher, a Torah scroll, Jerusalem, etc.

⁴¹ *Y. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:1, 81d.

⁴² See Chapter 2 above; *B. Sukkah* 27b (*b. Rosh Hashanah* 16b); *b. Hagigah* 5b. For a semantic equivalence between "seeing the face of X" and "receiving the face of the *shekhinah*" see *b. Bava Batra* 10a.

R. Samuel said in the name of R. Ze'ira, "It was sufficient for him only because he received the face of his master (*pene rabbo*); for one who receives the face of his master is like one who receives the face of the *shekhinah*."⁴³

Whatever the exact grounds for the dispute between master and disciple, the resentment that R. Hosha'yah expresses, ocularly, toward R. Yoḥanan is perfectly clear.⁴⁴ The narrative is nonetheless keen to emphasize that R. Yoḥanan continued to "receive the face" of his teacher long after he had to, as a form of pilgrimage to the divine. The passage goes on to emphasize the desirability of this practice with a lengthy excursus on a series of biblical pairs of masters and disciples, in which the master is equated midrashically to God. The passage describes in each case the disciple's practices of veneration for his teacher. While the equation of sage and God may not be unusual, the recourse to divine visuality is striking.⁴⁵

Visible teaching and scholastic *techné*

The notion of the sage as an icon of the sacred was, as exemplified by the R. Me'ir narratives, bound up with the idea that the sight of the sage transmits knowledge and operates as a visual aid to learning. This particular capacity of the sage fits with well-established Greco-Roman and Near Eastern notions linking sight and knowledge, as well as sight and memory.⁴⁶

In biblical and Tannaitic traditions, some of these links are made in the revelation at Sinai. *M. Avot* 3:10 links memory and study to Deuteronomy 4:9's injunction not to "forget the words that your eyes saw." The *Mekhilta* emphasizes the visuality of God's revelation at Sinai (Exodus 19:11) with its

⁴³ *Y. 'Eruvin* 5:1, 22b (paralleled in *y. Sanhedrin* 11:4, 30b). See Hirshman, *Stabilization*, 52, 148, who offers two interpretations of this story, presuming that the *y. Sanhedrin* narrative presupposes the *y. 'Eruvin* one.

⁴⁴ Lieberman, *Hayerushalmi kifshuto*, vol. 1, 289.

⁴⁵ See *Sifre Deuteronomy* 49 (ed. Finkelstein, 114–15), where cleaving (*d-v-q*) to sages and their disciples is related to cleaving to God. Cf. *b. Ketubot* 111b (cleaving to a *talmid hakham* through marriage of one's daughter is like cleaving to the *shekhinah*); *b. Ketubot* 105b (giving a gift to a *talmid hakham* is like offering first fruits to God); *b. Berakhot* 10b (hosting a *talmid hakham* is like offering the daily sacrifice); *b. Berakhot* 64a: "R. Abin the Levite said, 'One who enjoys a meal at which a learned man (*talmid hakham*) is present is like one who enjoys the glory (*ziv*) of the *shekhinah*'"; *b. Pesahim* 22b.

⁴⁶ See Exodus 34:29–35, which describes the radiance of Moses' face after having spoken with God face to face. On wisdom and light, see *Memar Markah* 4:9, 6:11; John 1:6–9. Light imagery is used to describe the female figure of wisdom in the *Wisdom of Solomon*. On the Torah as light, see *Testament of Levi* 14:4; 2 *Baruch* 54:13–14, 59:2; *Genesis Rabbah* 3:1–3 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 1:18–19); *y. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:7, 83b; *y. Horayot* 3:7, 48b; *b. Berakhot* 17a; *b. Shabbat* 23b; *b. Bava Batra* 4a. See also Goering, *Wisdom's Root Revealed*, 45–49, and Goering, "Sapiential synesthesia."

claim that this divine appearance was specifically requested by the Israelites because, “One who hears is not like one who sees.”⁴⁷ *Sifre Deuteronomy* declares that, “Words of Torah are likened to fire.”⁴⁸ The *Mekhilta* imagines this visual revelation of God and Torah in various ways, including as “A word of fire seen coming out of the mouth of the Almighty.”⁴⁹ This notion of Torah as a fiery revelation emitted by God is, in some sense, a theory of Torah transmission that was also attached to the rabbinic sage.⁵⁰

As with the R. Me’ir stories, later rabbinic anecdotes, some of which we will treat below, reiterate this link between the light of Torah or fiery teaching and the luminosity of the sage.⁵¹ In the story about R. Me’ir at Rabbi’s son’s wedding, in *y. Betsah* 5:2, 63a (discussed above), sounds and words both cause confusion; sight, by contrast, is ultimately enlightening and pedagogic. That such illuminating (“*me’ir*”) teaching (“*orayta*”) can be manifested in the very sight of the sage’s body is an example of what we will call below sacred or sagely physiognomics. Another passage, in *y. Shabbat*, illustrates how the sight of the sage is bound up with the transmission of traditions. In the midst of statements about the importance of correctly attributing a tradition, and ideally tracing it through its tradents all the way back to Moses, we find:

Gidol says, “One who recites a tradition in the name of the person who said it should see the tradition’s author as if standing before him.” What is the reason? “A man goes about as a shadow (*betsalem*)” (Psalms 39:7).⁵²

⁴⁷ *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma’el, Bahodesh* 2 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 210–11). The *Mekhilta*’s dual interpretations ground the authenticity of the divine revelation at Sinai in a direct visual and auditory encounter with God. See also *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma’el, Bahodesh* 9 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 235).

⁴⁸ *Sifre Deuteronomy* 343 (ed. Finkelstein, 399–400).

⁴⁹ See *Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma’el, Bahodesh* 9 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 235); see also *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, in *Targum fragments from the Cairo Genizah*, and *Targum Neofiti*; *Mekhilta Derabbi Shim’on bar Yohai* to Exodus 20:15 (ed. Epstein-Melamed, 154); *Sifre Numbers* 41 (ed. Horowitz, 44) to Numbers 6:25.

⁵⁰ *Sifre Deuteronomy* 343 (ed. Finkelstein, 399–400), on Deuteronomy 33:2, makes this transference explicit. See also Steven Fraade’s transference reading of the “fiery words that issued from God’s mouth” to the “dialogical discourse of Torah study among rabbinic colleagues” (Fraade, “Kisses,” 55).

⁵¹ In *b. Hagigah* 27a, Jeremiah 23:29 (“Is not my word like fire?”) is used to show that the scholar’s “whole body is fire.” Sages are referred to in luminous terms *b. Berakhot* 28b (“light of Israel”); *b. Bava Batra* 4a (“eye of the world”); *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 1:1 (“torch,”); *b. Ketubot* 17a (paralleled in *b. Sanhedrin* 14a; “lamp of light”). On the future luminosity of sages, see *Leviticus Rabbah* 30:2 (ed. Margalio, 11:692–93). On the sage as light, see Alon, *Studies*, vol. 1, 187.

⁵² *y. Shabbat* 1:2, 3a (paralleled in *y. Qiddushin* 1:7, 61a); see Hirshman, *Stabilization*, 11–12. See also *y. Sheqalim* 2:6, 47a, a passage added to the Yerushalmi that is based on the Bavli (see *b. Yevamot* 96b), as is the case in *Sheqalim* in general. *y. Sheqalim* is included in many editions of the Babylonian Talmud, where it is rendered as Rav Gidol. On this (error), see Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 208, and Epstein, “Some details of the Yerushalmi,” 42. In *y. Sheqalim*, the scribe adds Gidol’s statement

That seeing, or visualization, should be founded in an actual experience of seeing is clear from what then follows:

It is written, “Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but who can find a faithful man?” (Proverbs 20:6).

“Many a man proclaims his own loyalty” – this refers to everyone else.

“But who can find a faithful man?” – this refers to R. Ze‘ira; for R. Ze‘ira said, “We pay no attention to the traditions of Rav Sheshet because he is blind (*gavra mafteḥah*).”⁵³

Here vision and the sage are intertwined for scholastic purposes, for ensuring the strength of the threads of transmitted teachings from which the oral Torah is woven. The visual image of the *ba‘al shemu‘ah*, the author of a tradition, guarantees that tradition’s longevity and authenticity in ensuring that teachings are properly attributed. In the Yerushalmi’s story about R. Yoḥanan taking offense at R. Ele‘azar, discussed in Chapter 5, his reasons are twofold: First, R. Ele‘azar runs away when he sees him; second, he fails to cite him by name when repeating his teachings.⁵⁴ The Talmud asks why citation by name matters so much. The answer is that when one recites a sage’s teachings in his name, his “lips whisper along with him in the grave.”⁵⁵ Repetition of the master’s teaching and attribution guarantees the teacher’s longevity beyond the grave, which in turn perpetuates the rabbinic project itself.

R. Ze‘ira enforces Gidol’s precept stringently by excluding traditions transmitted via the blind Babylonian Amora Rav Sheshet, who presumably is not a valid source because he did not see his own teachers.⁵⁶ This leads to a related difficulty with regard to traditions transmitted by individuals who have not met the tradition’s author. The pericope addresses this problem: R. Ze‘ira challenges two rabbis who transmit teachings in the names of sages they have not encountered. Their response is that they heard them through their own teachers. Thus, the pericope hovers between “seeing”

and the foregoing narrative to Rabban Gamaliel’s injunction, “One does not erect monuments for the righteous, because their words are their memorial” (paralleled in *Genesis Rabbah* 82:10 [ed. Theodor-Albeck, II:988], see *app. crit.*).

⁵³ Paralleled in *y. Qiddushin* 1:7, 61a. Cf. *b. Bava Metsi’a* 84a, about how R. Ze‘ira “fasted a hundred fasts in order to forget the Babylonian *gemara*” when he moved to Palestine.

⁵⁴ *Y. Mo‘ed Qatan* 3:7, 83c.

⁵⁵ *Y. Mo‘ed Qatan* 3:7, 83c (paralleled in *y. Berakhot* 2:1, 4b; *b. Yevamot* 97a; *b. Sanhedrin* 90b; *b. Bekhorot* 31b).

⁵⁶ Rav Sheshet is famous for his knowledge of Tannaitic sources (*b. ‘Eruvin* 67a). For Bavli’s the oft-used expression, “Rav Sheshet enlightened us with a Tannaitic teaching,” see *b. Yevamot* 35a, 56a–b, 58a; *b. Sotah* 6a–b; *b. Bava Batra* 53b.

in a literal sense and “visualizing” (through *shemu’ot*, “traditions,” but lit. “hearings”) – a slightly different register of vision.

Let us unpack the midrash that supports Gidol’s visual technique. The phrase “A man walks about in shadow” (*akh betselem yithallekh ish*, Psalms 39:6) comes in the midst of 39:7 in Psalms that thematizes the transience of life. In context, “man walks about in a shadow” implies a mere image or semblance.⁵⁷ The *derashah*, however, reworks this phrase into a call for regeneration, rather than a lament. It alludes to Genesis 1:27, in which Adam is made “in the image of God (*betselem elohim*).”⁵⁸ The exegesis also alludes to Genesis 6:9, “Noah walked (*hithallekh*) with God.” The midrash thus makes the sage doubly divine, by its allusion to the divine image and divine companionship. The midrashic underpinnings of this mnemonic technique convey not just a rabbinic scholastic technique, but a mandate for the disciple to fashion himself after the image of his teacher. In “seeing himself” as well as the master, and in “walking about with [his] image,” Gidol’s injunction and the subsequent exegesis offer as much a technique of the self as a technique of study. This element of observing the sage is manifest both implicitly and explicitly across Tannaitic and later sources, in which rabbinic disciples study appropriate behaviors in the realms of halakhah and the everyday by close observation of their masters.⁵⁹ This technique of visualizing the *tselem* of the teacher is an excellent example of how, in addition to perpetuating attributed traditions, the naming of the tradent also preserved the very vehicle of pedagogy, the sage–disciple bond.⁶⁰

In another Palestinian source, we find a rabbinized David, whose visual function is that of a halakhic mnemonic:

“And he [David] was ruddy, with beautiful eyes, and good looking (*tov ro’i*)” (1 Samuel 16:12).

⁵⁷ The translation of *betselem* here is contested. See, e.g., Dahood, *Psalms*, 238.

⁵⁸ See also Genesis 5:1. This form of *h-l-kh* is also used to refer to Enoch (Genesis 5:22–23) and Abraham (Genesis 17:1) walking with or before God. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 150–51, notes the connection to *halakhah*. One can understand the Hitpael verb, *yithallekh*, not only as intensive, but also in the reflexive sense, i.e. as a technique of the self, by which a student makes himself (into a person) by modeling himself according to the image of a master.

⁵⁹ Compare to similar injunctions in monastic sources to always see God; *Apophthegmata* (trans. Ward, *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 2), and *Vita Prima Graeca* 48 (cited in Burrows, “Visibility,” 15, 31, n. 24). On students and sages looking at other sages in order to study correct halakhic conduct, see *m. Sukkah* 3:9; *t. Berakhot* 1:6; *b. Berakhot* 24a, 34b, 38b, 62a; *b. Shabbat* 10a; *b. Yevamot* 104a; *b. Hullin* 5b, 6b. See n. 20 above. On the importance of seeing and imitation for the rabbinic student, see Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 181–90.

⁶⁰ Martin Jaffee has shown how crucial the sage–disciple relationship was to rabbinic culture, with its emphasis on the “face-to-face” interaction and the “living presence of the master.” Orality was emphasized in order to cultivate this (Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 97, 142, 151; cf. Brown, “Saint as exemplar,” 16).

R. Isaac said, "He was 'good looking' in halakhah; everyone who looked at him (*kol haro'ehu*) was reminded of his learning (*nizkar letalmudo*)."⁶¹

These Palestinian sources point to the scholastic efficacy of the sight of the sage, whether through visual recall of the sage, or through his mnemonic effects. This and Gidol's teaching relate sight to the acquisition and retention of knowledge.⁶² In the late-antique world, memory was understood as a sensory capacity, in effect, an image, impressed upon the mind or soul that could be summoned to the mind's eye.⁶³ The technique of attaching information to images, which were often set in a visualized architectural space, is described by Cicero and other ancient authors on rhetoric and memory.⁶⁴ Gidol's technique involves affixing a *res* (memory item) to an *imago* (image) of its author in a visualized encounter, rather than in an imaginary architectural space.⁶⁵ In other words, the teaching is memorized and visualized in the context of the master-disciple relationship.⁶⁶

Vision is also linked to study in Babylonian sources, which emphasize visuality in the context of scholastic mnemonic techniques.⁶⁷ Amidst a passage in which various tips designed to enhance retention of learning are presented (do not look at the face of a corpse or at the inscription on a grave, do not pass between two women), fourth-century Babylonian Amora Rav Mesharshya gives the following advice to his sons:

When you wish to go in and study before your master, recite the Tannaitic traditions and [then] go in before your master. When you sit before him,

⁶¹ *Leviticus Rabbah* 20:1 (ed. Margalio, 1:443–44), cf. *b. Sanhedrin* 93b, *b. Berakhot* 63b. See Kalmin, *Sage*, 83–85; Naeh, "Art of memory"; Baumgarten, "Metaphors of memory"; Naeh, "Make yourself many rooms"; *t. Sotah* 7:12.

⁶² On memory in rabbinic and *Hekhalot* sources, see Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, 33–43 and *Merkavah Shelemah* 4b.

⁶³ For the scholastic and the visual, see *t. Bava Metsi'a* 2:30 (paralleled in *t. Horayot* 2:5): "enlightened his eyes with his teaching (*he'ir 'enayim bemishnato*)"; *y. Bava Metsi'a* 2:13, 8d (paralleled in *y. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:7, 83b; *y. Horayot* 3:7, 48b); *b. Yevamot* 35a, 56a–b, 58a; *b. Sotah* 6a, 6b; *b. Bava Metsi'a* 33a; *b. Bava Batra* 53b. Consider also the expression "enlightens a face in law (*me'ir panim behalakha*)": *b. Berakhot* 63b; *b. 'Eruvin* 13b; *b. Sanhedrin* 93b. For faces (*panim*) as proofs: *y. Sanhedrin* 4:2, 21a–b; *Genesis Rabbah* 93:3 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 111:932). On recollection as a kind of ocular scanning, see *y. Kil'ayim* 9:3, 32b (paralleled in *y. Ketubot* 12:3, 35a), cf. Augustine, *Confessiones*, 10.15.23.

⁶⁴ See Cicero, *De Oratore*, 2.86.353–54; Quintillian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 11.2, and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 3.16.28–24.30, for further instances of the links between vision, images, and memory theory.

⁶⁵ See *b. Qiddushin* 70b for another type of mnemonic technique. Thanks to Richard Kalmin for this reference.

⁶⁶ See Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 155.

⁶⁷ The Bavli in a long "primer on education" (*b. Eruvin* 53a) declares that Judeans retained their learning because they "revealed the tractate" (*gale masekhta*) unlike the Galileans. It goes on to link David who "revealed the tractate" with Psalms 119:75 "those who fear you will see me (*yir'uni*) and be glad"; see Hirshman, *Stabilization*, 54–55.

look at his lips, as it is written, “And your eyes shall see your teacher” (Isaiah 30:20).⁶⁸

Isaiah 30:20, also cited in *b. Eruvin* 13b to support the notion that looking at the face (even more than at the back) of a sage enhances one’s sharpness, is used here to ground the efficacy of looking at the teacher’s face, specifically his lips in motion.⁶⁹ In both cases, the verse’s contextual reference to God as teacher is transferred to the face of the rabbinic sage. This transference also imports a fund of rabbinic ideas about divine teaching and revelation, which, we have noted, was emphatic about the visibility of God and his word. Thus, the vision of the speaking sage is taken to be efficacious in promoting the memorization of his words. In Palestinian sources, this is also linked to memorization and attribution.⁷⁰ In another Babylonian source, the visual perception of a teacher’s lips is linked to the transmission and authenticity of traditions, recalling Gidol’s injunction in *y. Shabbat*; here, Rav Dimi emphatically declares the accuracy of a teaching he has shared:

By God! “My eyes have seen, and not a stranger’s” (Job 19:27). I heard it from R. Jeremiah’s lips; R. Jeremiah from R. Ze’ira; R. Ze’ira from Rav Ḥiyya b. Ashi; and Rav Ḥiyya b. Ashi from Rav.⁷¹

Rav Dimi’s teaching is authenticated by dint of his having heard it directly from R. Jeremiah’s own lips. This is supported by Job 19:27, which privileges the transmission based on first-hand, eyewitness testimony.⁷² Teachings need to be *seen*, face to face, as well as heard, in order to be trusted.

As discussed above, Tannaitic sources understood the Sinaitic teaching (or the divine “word”) as a visible flame that emitted from God’s mouth to the Israelites. There are several instances in the Yerushalmi and Bavli in which the sages’ Torah study emits fire; in some of these cases, the

⁶⁸ *B. Horayot* 12a (paralleled in *b. Keritot* 6a; cf. *b. Sotah* 49a). See *azkir gevurot eloah* (“Let me recount the wonders of God”), by the fifth-century CE poet Yose ben Yose, who describes the high priest’s turn toward the oracular *urim vetumim* in terms of a student looking at his master: “His eyes cast to his Teacher/Like a student to his master” (trans. Swartz, in Swartz and Yalom (eds.), *Avodah*, 260).

⁶⁹ On the value of visual aids, in this case fringes, see *b. Menahot* 43b: “Seeing leads to remembering; remembering leads to action.”

⁷⁰ See *b. Megillah* 18b, in which the verses, “Let your eyelids look straight before you” (Proverbs 4:25) and, “Will you direct (*ta’if*) your eyes from it? It is gone” (Proverbs 23:5), are applied to R. Me’ir’s exceptional memory (in contrast to one who removes one’s eyes and forgets all).

⁷¹ *B. Shabbat* 145a. This should be read in conjunction with the discussion on the same folio about “a witness attesting to what he heard from the lips of another witness,” in which hearsay is distinguished from first-hand witnessing.

⁷² See *b. Rosh Hashanah* 25b.

link between such sagely labor, Sinaitic revelation, and fiery emission is explicit.⁷³ Such ideas are clearly at play in the following passage in the Bavli, which transfers the imagery of fiery Torah to the dialectical discourse between master and student:

I remember when I was sitting before Rabbi, seventeen rows behind Rav, I saw sparks of fire leaping from the mouth of Rabbi into the mouth of Rav and from the mouth of Rav into the mouth of Rabbi, and I could not understand what they were saying.⁷⁴

Here, a Babylonianized Rabbi Yoḥanan recalls his student days; from his seat in the back, he sees sparks of Torah being transmitted from master to student and back again but is unable to partake in, much less comprehend, this mouth-to-mouth communication. This is another variation of visual-oral transmission, or even exchange. As is the case with R. Me’ir in *b. ‘Eruvin* 13b, a hallmark of brilliance, besides its literal visibility, is its occasional incomprehensibility to others. Sometimes, the teacher is one who “enlightens one’s eyes”; at other times, however, the radiance of the sage overwhelms, confuses, or is misunderstood.

As in *b. ‘Eruvin* 13b, R. Yoḥanan’s reminiscence here reflects a distinctly Babylonian scholastic culture, both in its description of spatial hierarchy in the academy and in its depiction of a dialectic brilliance that is both elitist and exclusionary, in contrast with the far more modest visual transmission in the Yerushalmi, in which rabbis “merit” Torah. However, despite these observable differences between sagely visibility in Palestinian and Babylonian circles, both share a deep investment in its potentially extramissive, transformative, and instructive power, often posed in visible terms of light and radiance.

Sagely physiognomics: did you know a sage when you saw one?

Thus far we have seen how the sage was a visible manifestation of divine revelation that was good for the eyes (as in the case of R. Hosha’ya, whose face R. Yoḥanan persisted in receiving long after he was learning anything) and also, perhaps unsurprisingly, good for scholarship.⁷⁵ But what does this investment in the visibility of the sage mean? Here we show that

⁷³ See, e.g., *y. Hagigah* 2:1, 77b (paralleled in *b. Hagigah* 15b) discussed in Chapter 2. In this narrative, the spectacle induced by the rabbinic study mirrors that of the divine revelation at Sinai. See also *b. Sukkah* 28a; *Leviticus Rabbah* 16:4 (ed. Margaliot, 1:354–55); *Mekhilta Derabbi Shim’on b. Yoḥai* to Exodus 19:18 (ed. Epstein-Melamed, 143–44); *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:10.

⁷⁴ *B. Hullin* 137b. This is reminiscent of *b. Menahot* 29b.

⁷⁵ This section title derives from a similar formulation in Hezser, *Social Structure*, III.

visual discernment, that is the ability to recognize a sage when seeing one, was itself an important part of becoming a rabbi (and a proper Jew). This concern to see and be seen properly – as sages or their disciples – is expressed in a variety of sources, early and late.

Shaye Cohen has asked, “Did you know a Jew in antiquity when you saw one?” His answer, no, disrupts essentialist notions about ancient Jews.⁷⁶ Cohen argues that, “Our modern scholarly difficulty in distinguishing between Jews and gentiles in antiquity faithfully mirrors the thinness of the boundary between Jews and gentiles in antiquity.”⁷⁷ He points out that “not a single author says that Jews are distinctive because of their looks, clothing, speech, names or occupations.”⁷⁸ Cohen suggests that “generally speaking, Jews looked like everybody else.”⁷⁹

However, rabbinic sources claim otherwise:

Thus are Israel: wherever one of them [Israel] goes, he cannot say that he is not a Jew [*yehudi*] because he is recognizable (*nikkar*), as it says, “All who see them will recognize them (*kol roe’hem yakkirum*), for they are the seed that God has blessed” (Isaiah 61:9).⁸⁰

R. Pinḥas said, “It happened that two prostitutes from Ashqelon were quarrelling. In the course of the quarrel one said to the other, ‘You should not go out because your face looks (*hazyan apikh*) like a Jew.’ After some days, they reconciled, and the [other] one said, ‘I forgive and absolve you for everything you said except for what you said about my looking like a Jew.’”⁸¹

It is true that these sources fail to specify “exactly what makes a Jew recognizable.”⁸² While it may be that on a physical level Jews did not look

⁷⁶ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 67. ⁷⁷ Ibid. See Hezser, *Social Structure*, 123–30.

⁷⁸ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 28.

⁷⁹ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 53. Cf. Jacobs, *Remains*, who shows how the colonial Christian gaze saw Jewish difference in very particular ways. Jacobs is not claiming that Jews looked different, but rather points to the sociocultural makings of visible difference.

⁸⁰ *Song of Songs Rabbah* 6:17. See also *Song of Songs Rabbah* 2:9, which also relies on Isaiah 61:9, paralleled in *Leviticus Rabbah* 23:6 (ed. Margalioth, 11:534). Cf. *Leviticus Rabbah* 23:2 (ed. Margalioth, 11:527–28). See Cohen, *Beginnings*, 66, and Baron, “Problems,” 52, n. 23. Cohen also cites *y. Avodah Zarah* 2:1, 42c. On Israel’s visible distinctiveness, see *Song of Songs Rabbah* 3:20 to *Song of Songs* 3:11: “Sons who are marked as mine (*metsuyyanim li*) by [lack of] shaving (*tiglahat*), circumcision, and *tsitsit*”; similarly *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:62 to *Song of Songs* 1:15 and *Songs of Songs Rabbah* 4:2 to *Song of Songs* 1:2; *Lamentations Rabbah* 2:13 (ed. Buber, 59b). On rabbis and hairstyles, see Berkowitz, “Limits.”

⁸¹ *Lamentations Rabbah* 1:11 (ed. Buber, 38a), s.v. “Look, God, and see how despised I am.” I follow the manuscripts that give this reading, which makes best sense especially given the verse to which the story relates that highlights the visibility of Israel’s current miserable state; cf. Buber’s rendering and comments, *ad loc.* On Jewish distinctiveness due to observance of the commandments (compared to the distinctiveness of the Cushites’ skin), see *Sifre Numbers* 99 (ed. Horowitz, 99); as per all mss. except Ms. London and the *editio princeps* which has *meshunnim* instead of *metsuyyanim*).

⁸² Cohen, *Beginnings*, 67.

distinctive in the late-antique Mediterranean, what is noteworthy here is the existence of a rabbinic claim that there was something distinctive about the way they looked. Put differently, it is precisely the lack of any physically determined features, the “thinness” of the boundary between Jews and gentiles, that makes the rabbinic cultivation of difference of such interest to the cultural historian. In rabbinic sources, we see an assurance that one could “know a Jew” or gentile, or man, or woman, or Roman, or Persian “when one saw one.”⁸³ Good Jews, or good rabbis, at any rate, were to train their gazes to see differently and so, see (or produce) visible difference. Such discerning vision was, in itself, a mark of being a rabbi. Not only were rabbis supposed to see in distinctive ways, they were also to be *seen* as distinctive by those who knew how to look.

We might view this cultivation of visible difference, along with its detection, as an insider physiognomics. Teresa Shaw has called this phenomenon, as it pertained to Christian holy men, “the appearance of holiness.”⁸⁴ She notes how it functions as much to limit those who have the capacity to see and designate holiness as it does to keep out charlatans. This notion of the “appearance of holiness,” or what we might call a “physiognomics of the sacred,” helps us understand some of the strategies of the rabbinic authors who worked to narrate the visible holiness in the figure of the rabbinic sage.

Physiognomics refers to the techniques by which one discerned a person’s interior state, disposition, or character from their external appearance, particularly, but not exclusively, from the face. The practice was well established in Greek and Near Eastern antiquity.⁸⁵ In late antiquity, one’s appearance was not only potentially readable, but also something to fashion and to shape.⁸⁶ While sources reveal the intense scrutiny to which emperors, generals, holy men, and ordinary people were subjected, historians, hagiographers, and teachers of rhetoric and oratory instructed their

⁸³ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 67. On this aesthetic sensibility and its cultivation, see Auslander, “Boundaries.”

⁸⁴ Shaw, “Askesis,” 498.

⁸⁵ For treatises from the third century BCE to the fourth century CE, see Pseudo-Aristotle, *Physiognomica*; Polemo Rhetor of Laodicea, *De Physiognomia*; Adamantius, *Physiognomica* and *De Physiognomica*. Jewish physiognomic texts include: 4Q186 and 4Q561, Qumranic texts in which the spiritual and moral dispositions of a person are revealed by their eyes, teeth, and body; *hakkarat panim lerabbi yishma’el*, a *Hekhalot* text of physiognomic techniques for determining a person’s ability to study mysticism (see Scholem, *Hakkarat Panim*; Scholem, “Ein Fragment”; Gruenwald, “Further Jewish physiognomic and chiromantic fragments”; T.-S. K 21.95 L., in Schäfer (ed.), *Geniza-Fragmenten*, 135–39).

⁸⁶ Gleason, *Making Men*; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*; Evans, “Physiognomics.” On physiognomics in Jewish and Christian circles, see Popović, *Reading the Human Body*; Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness*; Frank, *Memory*.

readers in desirable deportment and appearance.⁸⁷ Physiognomics was an interpretive lens through which to view and to categorize a vast swathe of features of human life, from moral character to temperament, from gender and class, and even ethnicity. At the heart of this scrutiny and studied self-expression lurked the desire to know what one was looking at and to minimize misrecognition. A failure to see correctly or to be seen properly bore serious consequences for both viewer and viewed.

In light of the above, it is significant that the rabbis wished to understand themselves as visibly identifiable. As *Sifre Deuteronomy* puts it, after a series of comparisons between Torah and fire:

Words of Torah are compared to fire . . . As fire makes a mark (*roshem*) on the body of anyone who uses it, so words of Torah make a mark on the body of anyone who uses them. As with fire, those who labor with it are recognizable (*nikkarin*) among creatures, so too the disciples of the sages are recognizable (*nikkarin*) by their speech, by their manner of walking, and by their robing in the market.⁸⁸

Like other holy men, rabbis were often supposed to be identifiable by their radiance, or, in Martin Jaffee's words, their "beaming faces."⁸⁹ Some sources, however, express sagely visibility in terms of darkness, disfigurement, and ugliness: Study here "impresses" the body with scars, and there is an inverse relationship between wisdom and aesthetic appearance.⁹⁰

Song of Songs Rabbah puts sagely visibility in deictic terms: "Words of Torah are recognizable on the body (*nikkarin baguf*), so that people can show with their finger (*mar'in ba'etsba*) and say, 'This one is a student of the sages.'"⁹¹ Torah teaching, like drinking wine, is visible upon the

⁸⁷ Shaw, "Askesis"; Lim, *Public Disputation*, 58–59, refers to the "anatomy of visible holiness" in the context of Eunapius' use of physiognomy. It is partly in this light that we might understand the reading in *b. Yoma* 72b of Exodus 25:10 ("Inside and outside you shall cover it [the ark] with pure gold"): "Rava said, 'Any scholar whose inside is not like his outside (*tokho kevaro*), is no scholar.'" See *b. Berakhot* 27b and Cohen, "Patriarchs and scholars," 76–79.

⁸⁸ *Sifre Deuteronomy* 343 (ed. Finkelstein, 399–400) on Deuteronomy 33:2 ("Lightning flashing at them from his right hand"). See Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, 45, 207, nn. 91–92, 211, 224, n. 198, 242. See *b. Bava Batra* 75b on the appropriate clothing and skin exposure for a sage.

⁸⁹ Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 154. See, e.g., *b. Kerubot* 17a (paralleled in *b. Sanhedrin* 14a; R. Abbahu as "lamp of light"). For radiant Christian holy men, see Ward, *Desert Fathers*, 103 (Silvanus 12), 196–97 (Pambo 12). In *y. Nazir* 5:1, 53d a rabbi's glowing shows his insight.

⁹⁰ In *b. Shabbat* 34a, R. Shim'on b. Yoḥai's scarred body is a marker of his increased dialectical brilliance: "If you did not see me like this, you would not find me as learned." On the ugliness of Jesus and Socrates contrasted with their inner beauty, see Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, 3.1.1–3, and Plato, *Symposium* 215a–b, 216d–e.

⁹¹ *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:19. On the physiognomics of knowledge, see *Pesiqta Derav Kahana* 4:4 (ed. Mandelbaum, 1:66), which follows with three physiognomic sagely stories. For rabbinic faces blanching, blushing, and shining in the context of Torah study, see *Sifre Numbers* 148 (ed. Horowitz, 195) (paralleled in *b. Menahot* 68b).

countenance, presumably as a flush or glow. Some centuries later, Pisentius, bishop of Coptos in the sixth to early seventh century, is described as having eyes “full of light” and a countenance that glowed like someone “who had been in a wine-shop.”⁹² This visual resemblance between drunkenness and saintliness touches on the problems involved in deciphering the source of sacred radiance. Consider a pair of anecdotes about R. Judah b. Ilā’y and R. Abbahu.⁹³ A Roman matron (or in other versions a heretic or idolater) sees (*hamte*) and questions R. Judah b. Ilā’y about his glowing face (*appoy nehirin*), wondering whether he is a drunkard, a moneylender who takes interest, or a pig breeder.⁹⁴ Indignantly, he curses her and explains that his teaching is the cause of his radiance, citing Ecclesiastes 8:1, “A person’s wisdom lights up his face.” On the one hand, the narrative is a salutary confirmation of the very real physical radiance that is supposed to light up the face of the sage. On the other hand, it puts such claims into question through the earthy, irreverent, and humorous gaze of the Roman matron, a double outsider as a woman and a gentile.

This anecdote is followed by a story in which R. Yoḥanan’s students “saw R. Abbahu (*hamuneh*) with his face lit up (*appoy nehirin*).” They report to R. Yoḥanan that R. Abbahu must have found treasure, but R. Yoḥanan suggests that R. Abbahu may have discovered a new teaching (*orayta hadta shema*).⁹⁵ Of course, it turns out that R. Yoḥanan is correct; R. Abbahu had just uncovered a Tannaitic teaching (*tosefta ‘atiqta*), and R. Yoḥanan applies to him Ecclesiastes 8:1. In some sense, then, both R. Yoḥanan and his students are right: R. Abbahu discovered a Torah treasure. Torah radiates as light from the countenance of these holy men, even if not everyone understands its significance and some people read more material causes into it.⁹⁶

⁹² Bishop Pisentius in Budge, *Coptic Apocrypha*, 290 (discussed in Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 277).

⁹³ *Y. Pesahim* 10:1, 37c (paralleled in *y. Shabbat* 8:1, 11a; *Pesiqta Derav Kahana* 4:4); cf. also *y. Sheqalim* 3:2, 47c and *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 8:1, and the following similar versions in *b. Nedarim* 49b and *b. Berakhot* 55a, where R. Judah and R. Judah b. Ilā’y suggest that their faces shine because they relieve themselves often. Daniel Stökl-Ben Ezra very plausibly argues that the portion of the Palestinian Talmud accounts concerning R. Judah b. Ilā’y is a later insertion. In his treatment he ignores the latest version of the narrative put together by the editor (i.e. the R. Judah b. Ilā’y character) and treats the matron as interrogating R. Jonah; see Stökl-Ben Ezra, “Parody and polemics,” 287–88. However, it should be noted that (most) later versions of the story continue to treat R. Judah b. Ilā’y as the protagonist with the shining face. I treat R. Judah b. Ilā’y as the central protagonist, even if he may be a later literary insertion; his addition has the narrative effect of recasting him, rather than R. Jonah, as the central figure.

⁹⁴ See Jaffee’s suggestive analysis in *Torah in the Mouth*, 153–56. See Stökl-Ben Ezra, “Parody and polemics,” 289, for the observation that the last two activities serve to define one as an outsider.

⁹⁵ Again, the allusion to light playing with *nehirin*.

⁹⁶ Certain especially iconic and beautiful sages, such as R. Yoḥanan, were thought to emit light; see, e.g., *b. Berakhot* 5b, where R. Yoḥanan exposes his arm in order to light up the room. See Chapter 4, n. 223.

These two somewhat satiric anecdotes, the first featuring a Tannaitic protagonist, the second featuring Amoraim, make the point that even (or especially) if the luminescence of wisdom is visible, it can easily be mistaken for a sign of less salutary occupations. While misreadings can be unflattering, in all these stories, they reflect poorly on the viewer, rather than on the misidentified sage. In the story about R. Abbahu, only R. Yoḥanan is able properly to diagnose the sage's facial radiance.⁹⁷ At play in physiognomics of this kind is the perceptual capacity and position of the viewer: Is he or she "inside" the hermeneutics of vision or outside of it?⁹⁸ We find that other kinds of visible indicia of sageliness (such as ugliness or physical scarring) can also be misread, sometimes by uninitiated rabbinic figures who need guidance, and sometimes by nonrabbinic, non-Jewish outsiders.⁹⁹ Rabbinic insiders can potentially learn to read this visual cue correctly, but the non-rabbinic outsider, the Roman, or the heretic tend categorically to misperceive the sage's sageliness, though we will see some important exceptions to this tendency. By definition, a rabbinic insider is distinguished by his capacity (or potential) to see properly and to recognize subtle signs and sights that the outsider might fail to read, see, or appreciate.¹⁰⁰

The sight of the sage was invested with various functions. The sagely physiognomics discussed here surface chiefly in Palestinian texts (where they appear in the Bavli they are subsumed into lessons about digestion). Furthermore, training the eye to see the sage properly was in no small way bound up with the formation and consolidation of rabbinic group identity and norms of sociality. In the remainder of this chapter we turn to the ways that the sight of the rabbinic sage was symbolically marked, through acts of veneration. Such practices served to "symbolically assert existing social conditions and to mark newly emerging social realities."¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 153, uses the term "diagnosis."

⁹⁸ See *y. Ketubot* 12:3, 35a (paralleled in *y. Kil'ayim* 9:4, 32b): "A weaver came to R. Yoḥanan and said, 'I saw the heavens falling in a dream, but one of your students supported it.' He asked him, 'Would you recognize him?' He said, 'If I saw him, I would recognize him.' He made all his students pass before him, and he recognized R. Yose."

⁹⁹ In *b. Hullin* 137b, R. Yoḥanan's self-stated uncomprehending spectatorship, is an example of the former, i.e. rabbis who are not privy to certain types of visual or visible sagely knowledge, whereas *b. Ta'anit* 7a–b, in which the Roman emperor's daughter exclaims to R. Joshua b. Ḥananya, "Such beautiful wisdom in such an ugly vessel," is an example of outsider-misperception. On scholars of Torah being "black like the raven," see *Song of Songs Rabbah* 5:9 to Song of Songs 5:11 ("but shining in the world to come"); *b. Eruvin* 22b; *b. Sanhedrin* 100a and see also n. 90 above.

¹⁰⁰ For a fascinating example of a rabbi looking at rabbis, see *y. Yevamot* 1:6, 3a, in which R. Dosa b. Hyrcanus asks for his "eyes to be brightened so that I may see the sages of Israel." He goes on to see and pronounce over each. Cf. *b. Yevamot* 16a in which the visibility and "diagnosis" is absent.

¹⁰¹ Migge, "Greeting." For work on status and embodiment, see Cairns (ed.), *Body Language*; Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*; Corbeill, *Nature Embodied*; Hall, "Deference-Greeting."

First, we examine a set of stories in the Yerushalmi which treat Roman perceptions and veneration of rabbinic sages; we will then turn to intra-rabbinic practices.

The sage and the imperial gaze

In the Yerushalmi anecdote cited above, R. Abbahu was misread by R. Yoḥanan's students, who thought his luminescence was a matter of money. The Bavli also features a radiant R. Abbahu, but in a completely different scenario:

When R. Abbahu came from the academy (*metivta*) to the house of Caesar,¹⁰² handmaids from Caesar's house went out towards him and sang, "Master (*rava*) of his people, leader of his nation, shining light (*botsina dinehora*), blessed is your coming in peace!"¹⁰³

Here, as in other places, R. Abbahu is depicted as enjoying special relations with imperial representatives. Most noteworthy for our purposes is that his radiance is connected to his power and recognition by the "house of Caesar," which acclaims him in the custom of court ceremony.

Most anecdotes about visual piety toward the sage involve other rabbis as the protagonists, which may indicate the relative insularity of the rabbinic movement, at least in Amoraic Palestine. The Yerushalmi's story about the matrona's mocking gaze confirms this picture of insularity. However, the following passage about encounters between rabbis and Roman officials furnishes a counter-example. *Y. Berakhot* 5:I, 9a mixes the Bavli's appropriation of imperial spectacle and acclamation for and to rabbis with the more familiar Palestinian elements of tension and contestation:

- (A) R. Yoḥanan was sitting and reciting in front of the Babylonian synagogue of Sepphoris. The prefect (*arkhona*) passed by and he did not get up before him. They [the prefect's guards] wanted to hit him. He said to them, "Let him be, he is occupied with the laws of his creator."
- (B) R. Ḥanina and R. Joshua b. Levi came before the proconsul (*antipota*) of Caesarea. He saw them and rose before them. They said to him, "Do you get up before these Jews?" He said to them, "I saw faces of angels (*appehon demal'akhin hamit*)."
- (C) R. Jonah and R. Yose came before Ursicinus in Antioch. He saw them and rose before them. They said to him, "Do you get up before these Jews?" He said, "I see the faces of these men (*appehon dehane ana haze*) in battle, and I am victorious."

¹⁰² See generally Levine, "R. Abbahu," 67, who adds: "to the Caesarean proconsul."

¹⁰³ *B. Ketubot* 17a (paralleled in *b. Sanhedrin* 14a, which reads "matrons" for "handmaids").

- (D) R. Abin came before the emperor. When he was leaving, he turned his neck [i.e. his back, on the emperor]. They [the guards] sought to kill him, but they saw two streaks of fire emanating from his neck and they left him alone. [This] fulfills the Scripture: "And all the peoples of the earth shall see (*vera'u*) that the name of God is proclaimed over you, and they shall fear you" (Deuteronomy 28:10).¹⁰⁴

This set of anecdotes follows on a *mishnah* discussing whether one can interrupt one's prayer in order to greet someone.¹⁰⁵ The Yerushalmi initially considers the distinction between greeting a Jewish king versus a gentile ruler, before introducing the first story, of Rabbi Yoḥanan and the prefect. The scenario and ensuing debate resemble those in *y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65c–d, which we will see deals with whether one ought to interrupt one's Torah study to rise for a sage.¹⁰⁶ Here, however, the competing demands of veneration are addressed even more starkly; not only does the sage not venerate the Roman, but the Roman recognizes the superior claim of the sage, whether voluntarily or otherwise. In two of the later instances, the Roman official even venerates the sage. Note the usage of the basic language of visual piety, "He saw and rose before them." Roman officials, as we shall see, venerate rabbis according to the rabbis' own idiom.

Let us note some of the features of these narratives and the way that they function cumulatively. The four stories take the same basic scenario but raise the stakes each time: First, R. Yoḥanan fails to rise; next, Roman officials rise before R. Ḥanina and R. Joshua b. Levi and then R. Jonah and R. Yose; finally, R. Abin commits an egregious breach of imperial court ritual and etiquette. In addition, the rank of the Roman official increases in each story from a prefect up to the emperor himself, alongside the visibility of the sage's holiness.¹⁰⁷ The sage is recognized first as a Torah scholar, then as an angel, then as a vision who ensures military victory, and ultimately, in a fiery revelation, as a God-like figure.

In anecdotes (B) and (C), ritualized seeing occurs in the form of veneration, seeing and rising. Visuality is reiterated in the Roman official's explanation to his attendants of why he has behaved in contravention of

¹⁰⁴ *Y. Berakhot* 5:1, 9a (partial parallel in *b. Berakhot* 32b–33a). See Baruch Bokser's careful rendering of the passage in Bokser, "Wonder-working," which I follow with minor changes.

¹⁰⁵ *M. Berakhot* 5:1. The Yerushalmi builds from the Mishnah's statement, "Even if a king asks after his welfare, he may not answer him."

¹⁰⁶ Cf. the halakhic context in which the story of R. Yoḥanan and R. Ele'azar is situated in the version in *y. Berakhot* 2:1, 4b. This concerns the question of whether one ought to interrupt one's recitation of the Shema in order to greet someone out of "love or fear," which the Talmud interprets to include one's teacher or superior in Torah learning.

¹⁰⁷ The sages themselves range from the third to fourth centuries CE.

expected ritual: "I saw faces of angels," and then "I see the faces of these men in battle, and I am victorious."¹⁰⁸ In these cases, the official is privy to sacred physiognomics, but rather than proving his own insider status, this knowledge has the effect of demonstrating the spectacular sanctity of the sage, who is recognized even by Roman officialdom. Ursicinus' vision of R. Jonah and R. Yose invites comparison with accounts of Alexander's vision of and encounter with the Jewish high priest in Josephus and rabbinic sources, and also, in the Roman context, with Christian accounts of Constantine's vision on the Mulvian bridge, a crucial legend for the recognition and rise of the church in the Roman empire.¹⁰⁹ Either way, this anecdote rewrites Roman imperial success as rabbinic success.

In anecdote [D], R. Abin disrupts the imperial court ceremonial by turning on his heel on the emperor after an audience. Charles Pazdernik alerts us to the ceremonial aspect of spectacle and the body language involved in veneration in the Roman throne-room. The gaze, spectacle, organization of space, and attendant rituals were all designed to reinforce the lowliness of the venerator in contrast to the elevated status of the "object of veneration."¹¹⁰ Anecdotes (B), (C), and especially (D) find echoes in Greco-Roman and Christian scenes in which holy men of various stripes – philosophers, bishops, monks – upset, by their spectacular sanctity, the usual order of imperial veneration. In some scenarios, as with Julian and Maximus, and anecdotes (B) and (C) here, this results in reversals of veneration.¹¹¹ Babylonian rabbis imagine a similar defiance of courtly convention in an anachronistic vision of a rabbinic sage in King Jehoshaphat's court:

When Jehoshaphat King of Judah would see (*ro'eh*) a disciple of the sages (*talmid hakham*), he would rise out of his throne and kiss and embrace him

¹⁰⁸ On the "angelic look" of the holy man in Christian hagiography, see *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, 2.1, 4.1, 6.1, 8.19; Frank, *Memory*, 51; Cameron, "Form and meaning"; Miller, "Strategies."

¹⁰⁹ See Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 11.302–47; *b. Yoma* 69a; *Megillat Ta'anit* 9; *Leviticus Rabbah* 13:5 (ed. Margalio, 1:293–94), *Genesis Rabbah* 61:7 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:666–69). In the rabbinic sources, Alexander's vision is followed by prostration when he actually encounters the high priest. These vision legends draw upon longstanding traditions in Greco-Roman sources of leaders experiencing theophanies in which gods admonish or promise success on the eve of battle (Cohen, "Alexander the Great"). In both Josephus' and the rabbinic versions, while performing obeisance Alexander prostrates not to the priest but to the God of Israel. Here, in *y. Berakhot* 5:1, 9a, the veneration stops at the sages themselves.

¹¹⁰ See Pazdernik, "Paying attention," 63–65.

¹¹¹ See Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 12.7.3, who disapproves of Julian's reverence. Libanius describes a similar encounter, but approvingly; see Libanius, *Orationes* 18.155, and Pazdernik, "Paying attention," 79.

and call him, "My master, my master (*rabbi, rabbi*); my lord, my lord (*mari, mari*)."¹¹²

In some cases, as in (B) and (C) in our *sugya*, the emperor realizes the special status of the holy man, even if his attendants and courtiers do not.¹¹³ In other instances, emperors are coerced into recognizing the holy man. In anecdote (D), something like this occurs when the imperial attendants seek to kill R. Abin for his disregard of imperial ceremony.¹¹⁴ This disturbance of convention, together with the fiery demonstration of the sage's holiness, recalls an episode in which Martin of Tours miraculously gains access to Valentinian's court:

The king, however, seeing him at a distance as he approached and gnashing his teeth that he had been admitted, did not, by any means, condescend to rise up as Martin advanced, until fire covered the royal seat and until the flames seized on a part of the royal person. In this way the haughty monarch is driven from his throne, and, much against his will, rises up to receive Martin.¹¹⁵

Like the anecdote of R. Abin, the court is forced to countenance a reversal of the norms of veneration. In one case, the visible threat of fire deters threats against the sage; in the other, it coerces Valentinian into veneration.¹¹⁶ These are moments in which rabbinic and ecclesiastical authority confronts, and trumps, imperial power.¹¹⁷ As Charles Pazdernik suggests, such breaches of imperial ceremony and etiquette in "accounts of rulers standing up" and

¹¹² *B. Ketubot* 103b, and *b. Makkot* 24a. Jehoshaphat's actions are said to conform to "he honors those who fear God" (Psalms 15:4). The anecdote probably highlights the visibility in the first part of the verse "To whose eyes the despised are contemptible." Note that the Babylonian parallel to *y. Berakhot* 5:1, 9a, *b. Berakhot* 32b–33a, condenses the entire passage into one tale about a generic *hasid* (pious man) and a gentile officer. The effect is rather different: the officer greets the pious man, who is praying and does not respond; he then challenges the pious man's piety by citing scriptural verses that indicate that he should not have risked his life by failing to interrupt his prayer and greet the officer; the pious man responds not with a counter-exegesis but with an *a fortiori* argument, to whose logic the officer concedes.

¹¹³ See *Vitae Sabae*, 142.3–21; 173.19–25 (discussed in Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 171).

¹¹⁴ Cf. the remarkable scene Ammianus describes in which the defector Antoninus meets Ursicinus and offers him Persian-style veneration: he kneels, practically touching the ground with his face, greets Ursicinus respectfully, and, when he takes his leave, makes sure not to turn his back, "respectfully moving backwards and showing his front until he was out of sight" (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 18.8.5–6).

¹¹⁵ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi* 2.5 (trans. Roberts, in Schaff and Wace (eds.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. VI, 41).

¹¹⁶ For another eruption of fire only seen by a select few, this time, from Martin himself, see Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi* 2.2.

¹¹⁷ Pazdernik, "Paying attention," 78–79.

venerating holy men dramatize “the confrontation and reconciliation of worldly rulers with bearers of the sacred.”¹¹⁸

In most of the Christian accounts, recognition of divine power yields political gains.¹¹⁹ Martin of Tours and Sabas have requests honored by the emperor in return for which they guarantee the emperor’s success. As in the rabbis’ and Josephus’ account of Alexander’s veneration of the high priest, the encounter with or visitation of the holy man carries with it a certain efficacy. By contrast, the purpose or outcome of the visits by rabbinic sages is not self-evident; the narrative seems rather to be about staging the visible display of rabbinic authority trumping Roman power. Unlike Christian hagiographers, rabbinic storytellers are working within a very different political reality that is far from the throne, and within an already established tradition of fantasy or wishful thinking, in which rabbis and emperors meet.

These anecdotes in *y. Berakhot* ultimately express more about rabbinic desire for ostentatious displays of their authority than anything about the realpolitik of Roman-rabbinic relations. Here we see subjects of the imperial gaze looking back and reclaiming their own image. As seen in Chapter 4, Babylonian sources express anxiety about the colonizing gaze of Romans, especially in terms of the empire’s power to sexualize and exploit its Jewish subjects. By contrast, these anecdotes in *y. Berakhot* 5:1, 9a offer a more triumphalist account, one which restores Jewish, and particularly rabbinic, integrity by constructing an “oppositional gaze” that uses this same realm of vision and power to defy and resist.¹²⁰ Here, the conventional object of the Roman imperialist gaze is not subjugated, but rather demands and appears to receive veneration and submission.¹²¹

As noted, the series of anecdotes reaches a crescendo in (D), in which R. Abin’s power is visible, violent, and potentially fatal (albeit in self-defense). Unlike the previous three officials, the emperor does not declare his visual recognition of the sage; rather, it is demonstrated with brutal clarity to all in the court. Rabbinic traditions of special figures emitting fire or being otherwise dangerous to behold draw upon various biblical

¹¹⁸ Pazdernik, “Paying attention,” 79. Pazdernik is careful to present this as only part of the picture.

¹¹⁹ See, e.g., Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi* 2.5.

¹²⁰ See Maxwell, *Colonial Photography*, 197. On the colonizing gaze, see Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*. See also hooks, *Black Looks*, 115–31, for an account of an oppositional black female gaze.

¹²¹ When Christian sources manifest this problem in the context of the political, the implications are rather different. The emperor was, after all, a Christian, even if he sometimes had to be chastened into supporting the “right” kind of Christianity.

precedents, including the theophany at Sinai, Moses' radiance, and Ezekiel's and Isaiah's descriptions of the chariot.¹²²

Perhaps most striking are the structural and substantive resemblances between this anecdote and the story of R. Me'ir interrupting Rabbi's son's wedding in *y. Betsah* 5:2, 63a. In *y. Betsah*, "they hurry after" R. Me'ir; here, "they sought to kill" R. Abin. In each narrative, a sage is under attack for having offended the honor of the court; patriarchal in one case, imperial in the other. In both cases, they are pursued, but the pursuit is stopped short by a revelation of the nape.¹²³ If *y. Betsah* invokes the seeing of God's back (Exodus 33:23), then *y. Berakhot* does the same, with the added warning, "You shall not see me and live" (Exodus 33:20).¹²⁴ The revelation of the sage's nape in *y. Betsah* results in Rabbi's declaration that he only acquired Torah knowledge because he saw R. Me'ir's nape; in *y. Berakhot*, the storyteller declares that this fulfills the biblical verse, "And all the peoples of the earth shall see (*vera'u*) that the name of God is proclaimed over you" (Deuteronomy 28:10).¹²⁵ The sight of flames shooting from R. Abin's neck makes it clear to "the peoples of the earth" that "the name of God is proclaimed over him," and that the sage, like the Lord, is to be feared.

The two narratives are complementary meditations on vision and power. The story in *y. Betsah* plays this out in the context of rabbinic circles, wherein the ultimate currency is Torah. *Y. Berakhot* operates at the level of the politics of imperialism and resistance, trafficking in fear rather than Torah to make its point. The visibility of the sage has different functions for gentile eyes than it does for Jewish ones. Ultimately, the *y. Berakhot* narrative takes sagely visibility beyond the rabbinic world, beyond the wider world of the Roman imperium, and potentially into the supernatural, as illustrated by a fifth anecdote appended to the four quoted above:

(E). R. Shim'on b. Yoḥay stated: "And all the peoples of the earth shall see that the name of God is proclaimed over you" (Deuteronomy 28:10) – 'all,' even spirits and demons."

¹²² Exodus 3:1–15 (God appears in a fire); Exodus 13:21–22 (a pillar of fire); Exodus 34:29–35 (Moses is so radiant that he must veil himself); Ezekiel 1 (the chariot); Isaiah 6 (the chariot); Daniel 1:13–15, 2:18, 7:9–10; 2 *Enoch* 7:1, 39; 3 *Enoch* 15; *b. Hagigah* 15a–16b. *Hekhalot* literature is replete with warnings about the dangers of incorrect looking and descriptions of angelic beings whose function is to guard thresholds from those who wish to gaze upon the divine, and emit flaming fire from their bodies. See, e.g., *Hekhalot Rabbati* §§159, 183; 3 *Enoch* 2.

¹²³ In *y. Berakhot*, it is the very exposure of R. Abin's nape to the emperor that is the cause of offence.

¹²⁴ This invokes Moses' overwhelming facial radiance (Exodus 34:29–35).

¹²⁵ In *b. Berakhot* 6a (paralleled in *b. Hullin* 89a), this verse is read to refer to the wearing of tefillin and their knot at the nape, which is shown to Moses by God.

R. Yannay and R. Yonatan were walking along the paths. Someone [a demon] saw them (*hamton*), greeted them, and said, "Peace upon you rabbis (*shelamkhon rabbaya*)."¹²⁶

After the dramatic epiphany of R. Abin's exit from the throne room, the editor inserts:

[This] fulfills the Scripture: "And all the peoples of the earth shall see (*vera'u*) that the name of God is proclaimed over you, and they shall fear you" (Deuteronomy 28:10).

It is this citation that the final demonic anecdote embellishes. Thus, Rabbinic visibility is so apparent that all, even emperors and demons, bow to it and extend the appropriate visual veneration, acting in accordance with rabbinic etiquette by marking their status as subordinate rather than equal to the rabbis. We find no precise parallel to this set of anecdotes in Babylonian sources, insofar as they depict rabbinic recognition by imperial powers in such visual and confrontational terms.¹²⁷ Palestinian storytellers took particular trouble to visually locate sanctity in the figure of the sage. Their concern to do so even in the eyes of Romans doubtless reflects the concerns and preoccupations of rabbis in fourth-century Palestine. Their doing so in terms that may not look out of place in hagiographies of pagan and Christian holy men shows rabbinic engagement with a cultural turn toward vision. Attention to these visual aspects of rabbinic piety necessitates and allows a reconsideration and reconfiguration of our picture of rabbinic piety more broadly. We now turn to some of the ways that Palestinians and Babylonians thought about intra-rabbinized veneration.

¹²⁶ *Pene Moshe*, *ad loc.*, understands this character to be a demon (as per R. Shim'on b. Yoḥay's statement). The rabbis respond, "We do not even bear the appearance of fellows for ill (*afilu to'ar haverut en 'alenu lera'*).” Bokser translates *rabbaya* as "lads," though he concedes that it could be a plural form for rabbis. For *rabbaya* as boy or lad, see *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Exodus 2:7–10 and Genesis 34:19. Kalmin, *Sage*, 128, translates the entire phrase as "may your peace be great," i.e. he takes *rabbaya* to modify *shelamkhon* (following the *Pene Moshe*, *ad loc.*). Bokser, "Wonder-working," 54, n. 38, 58, offers two interpretations of this cryptic tale. One is that the rabbis are greeted pejoratively by a passerby who insults them with the epithet "lads"; the second, which Bokser views as less plausible, but which seems more likely to me given the preceding emphasis on sagely visibility, is that the person greets the rabbis respectfully as rabbis (reading *rabbaya* as a plural of *rabba*), "perhaps identifying them by their appearance" (*ibid.*) This is also the interpretation in Ginzberg, *Some Abbreviations*, 139, n. 5. *Pene Moshe* reads the rabbis' response in the following fashion: Even though he [the demon] treated us as *haverim* (*to'ar havruta*) and did not greet as rabbis (*rabbotay*), no harm will befall us (*lo 'alenu lera'*). Cf. Beer, "Hevraya."

¹²⁷ The closest parallel to anecdote A is *b. Berakhot* 32b–33a (above, n. 112).

Sage veneration

Given that visiting one's master was a desirable substitute for pilgrimage to "receive the face of the *shekhinah*," as we saw above, it is no surprise that encounters between rabbis of differing statuses were invested with ritual and social significance.¹²⁸ R. Yishma'el b. R. Yose, we are told, saw (*hamteb*) R. Ḥiyya (or perhaps vice versa) in the bathhouse and was insulted when the latter failed to pay obeisance and bow to him (*itkanna' min qomoy*).¹²⁹ As we saw in the previous chapter, failures of veneration between R. Yohanan and his disciple, R. Ele'azar, are expressed as a lack of visual piety.¹³⁰ One version of the story appears in the context of interrupting the recitation of the Shema in order to greet one's teacher or superior in Torah learning.¹³¹ As Catherine Hezser points out, "This means that greeting a rabbinical scholar was not only considered a social convention but a religious duty as well."¹³² In the stories about Romans and rabbis in *y. Berakhot* 5:1, 9a, we saw something of visual veneration and deference on the part of Romans toward rabbis. Now we look more deeply into such practices among rabbinic figures of various statuses.

We begin by examining *y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65c–d, a long passage which treats the honor due to various rabbinic figures including the elder (*zaqen*), the sage (*hakham*), the patriarch (*nasi*), the Torah scholar ("Torah" or "Sinai"), the rabbi (*rav*), and other idealized, rabbinized figures, such as the high priest and the chief justice. The passage also considers those figures to whom honor might be due but who are not rabbis per se, including the old person (*sav*), the old common Jew (*sav 'am ha'arets*), and the nonrabbinic public appointee (*memunneh*). While visibility is not the governing theme in this lengthy treatise, it shows up as a significant aspect of the ritual veneration extended to various rabbinic worthies.¹³³

Y. Bikkurim 3:3, 65d comes in the context of *m. Bikkurim* 3:3, which vividly describes the entry of temple pilgrims into Jerusalem and how

¹²⁸ See *y. Shabbat* 6:9, 8c (Amoraim want to see the face [*mehme appuye*] of Samuel); *y. Megillah* 4:5, 75b (R. Yonah and R. Yose went to see a face [*mehme appin*]).

¹²⁹ *Y. Ketubot* 12:3, 35a (paralleled in *y. Kil'ayim* 9:4, 32b); cf. also *b. Qiddushin* 33a, in which the visual aspect is absent. The immediately preceding and subsequent discussions in the Palestinian sources concern R. Yishma'el's jealousy of R. Ḥiyya's status in Rabbi's eyes. For another failure in veneration, see *b. Hagigah* 15a: "R. Joshua b. Hananyah was standing on a step on the Temple Mount and Ben Zoma saw him and did not rise before him." Here, as in *y. Ketubot* 12:3, 35a, a person sees someone, fails to offer them the appropriate veneration (standing up or bowing), but is visually elsewhere (Ben Zoma is "gazing" [*mistakkel*] and R. Ḥiyya is "scanning with his eyes").

¹³⁰ *Y. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:7, 83c.

¹³¹ *Y. Berakhot* 2:1, 4b (paralleled in *y. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:7, 83c; *y. Sheqalim* 2.6, 47a; *b. Yevamot* 96b–97a).

¹³² Hezser, *Jewish Travel*, 129.

¹³³ On this passage, see Schwartz, *Mediterranean Society?*, 149–61.

they were greeted by the local citizenry. It is noteworthy that this larger literary pairing associates and effectively diverts discussion of pilgrimage ritual and etiquette to intra-rabbinic ritual and ceremony.¹³⁴ The passage transitions from the Mishnah's description of artisans greeting pilgrims as they enter Jerusalem, to the obligation to rise for an elder (*zaqen*),¹³⁵ noting that while artisans must interrupt their work to greet pilgrims, they need not do so in order to rise for an elder.¹³⁶ The passage then shifts to (mostly) halakhic sources related to the biblical obligation of honoring and rising for elders and other respected figures, and to scenarios containing

¹³⁴ On the importance of the larger literary context of a *sugya* as part of its message, see Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories*, 15, 24–29, and throughout.

¹³⁵ The term *zaqen* (elder) is not a stable term as deployed in rabbinic sources. Thus, while *Sifra Qedoshim* 3 (ed. Weiss, 91a) states that “a *zaqen* is nothing other than a *hakham*,” other sources are not so clear about this. In this particular passage, it is clear that *zaqen* refers to people of a certain status rather than the elderly. The fact that the passage cites R. Me’ir’s practice of also honoring the elderly ‘*am ha’aretz*’ seems to indicate the assumption that the *zaqen* here is a rabbi. Hezser surveys appearances of *zaqen* and attends to its inconsistent use and ambiguity (Hezser, *Social Structure*, 277–86). She observes that “not all rabbis of the Tannaitic period were elders and not all elders rabbis” (283) and notes that the only Tannaitic text that explicitly talks about elders being appointed is *Sifre Deuteronomy* 41 (ed. Finkelstein, 86–87). By contrast, Amoraic texts do talk of being appointed as an elder, but they are no more specific about the functions of elders (284–85). Hezser notes that at times *zaqen* seems to denote an office with leadership functions, while at other times it seems to be an age-based honorific, and sometimes it appears together with *nasi* and *av bet din* in what Hezser takes to be an “idealized high court which may have never existed in reality” (280). See also Jacobs, *Die Institution*, 90, who argues that it is difficult to distinguish the various functions of the *zaqen*, *hakham*, *dayyan*, and *rav*. Sivertsev, *Households*, 43–44, understands *zaqen* “as a reference to the member of the city councils of Jewish Palestine.” He notes that the term is “widely attested in rabbinic and non-rabbinic sources as a reference to municipal officials,” and that “*zaqenim* are routinely depicted as members of the local courts and judges.” Schwartz, *Mediterranean Society*?, 153, understands the usage of *zaqen* in *y. Bikkurim* 3:3 in its “technical sense: not an old man but a *memunneh* (a *hakham*, or sage, who has received judicial appointment).” Miller, *Sages*, 438, understands the primary concern in *y. Bikkurim* 3:3 as “the display of proper respect by standing before an ‘elder’ or scholar of Torah (both *zaqen*).” In other words he sees *zaqen* as potentially referring to age or to being a sage (thus “sage/elder [*zaqen*],” *ibid.*). He also, *pace* Alon (and Seth Schwartz), understands that this “entire *sugya*” treats “the various positions referred to as *rabbinic* positions” (440). While Miller concedes that it is difficult to know what *minnuy* refers to, he says that they likely refer to judicial appointments. His analysis assumes that the reference is to those appointed as rabbis for their money.

¹³⁶ See *t. Megillah* 3:24: “What is this rising about which the Torah said, ‘You shall rise before the aged’ (Leviticus 19:32)? One stands before him and asks after his welfare and answers while within four cubits. What is the honor about which the Torah said, ‘and honor the face of the elder’ (Leviticus 19:32)? One does not stand in his place, one does not speak in his place, and one does not contradict his word. One behaves toward him with fear and reverence, deals with him when he comes and goes in like manner, and they take precedence over everyone else, as it says, ‘He made them heads over the people’ (Exodus 18:25).” Besides *Sifra Qedoshim* 3 (ed. Weiss, 91a), *Targum Onkelos*, *Neofiti* and *Pseudo-Jonathan* and *b. Qiddushin* 33a understand Leviticus 19:32 to refer to Torah scholars. See also *Sifre Numbers* 92 (ed. Horowitz, 92–93) to Numbers 11:16 and *Sifra Dehovah* 6 (ed. Weiss, 19a). See *Genesis Rabbah* 59:6 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:635) for the Amoraic distinction between the elder and being elderly.

potentially conflicting objects of respect: the choreography of congregants in the synagogue (who faces what and whom); whether “the Torah rises for her son,” that is, whether sages (“Torah”) ought to interrupt their study in order to rise for other rabbis (the Torah’s “son”). The passage quotes a Tannaitic tradition about the relative veneration extended to the patriarch, chief justice, and sage, and then launches into an anecdote about a visually emphatic form of honor given to R. Me’ir, which was subsequently revoked. What then follow are anecdotes and midrashic determinations about Jewish officials whom the rabbis do not recognize, but who apparently claim the same pieties as those due to rabbinic “elders.” The basic logic linking these diverse units is the obligation in Leviticus 19:32, “You shall rise before the aged and honor (*vehadarta*) the face of the elder (*pene zaqen*).”¹³⁷

The first instance in which visibility is an important part of veneration is in the following description of pieties due toward the elder and the high priest:

R. Hezekiah in the name of R. Hanina b. R. Abbahu in the name of R. Avduma [of Haifa]: For an elder [the obligation to stand arises at a distance] of four cubits;¹³⁸ once he [the elder] has passed, one may sit down. For the high priest [the obligation to stand arises] from the point that he sees him (*ro’ehu*) until he is concealed from him (*nikhse mimmennu*).

Why [i.e. what is the scriptural basis for this ruling]? “Whenever Moses would go out to the Tent, all the people would rise [and stand, each one at the entrance of his tent, and they would gaze (*vehibbitu*) after Moses until he went into the Tent]” (Exodus 33:8).

Two Amoraim [interpreted this verse], one as praise, the other as disapproval. According to the one who says [they rose in] praise [saying]: see (*mehme*) a righteous person and acquire merit. According to the one who says [they rose out of] disdain, [they said]: see (*haze*) his calves, see his thighs – he is fat on the food of Jews, he drinks from the Jews, and his property is that of the Jews.¹³⁹

An Amora reports a tradition in which the honor due to an elder and a high priest is compared. While one stands to show veneration for both figures, based on Leviticus 19:32 and Exodus 33:8, the veneration shown to the high priest is greater. The veneration due to the high priest is triggered by sight, “from the point that he sees him,” and Exodus 33:8, with its description of the Israelites’ veneration of Moses, offers an excellent prooftext for a

¹³⁷ See *b. Bava Metsi’a* 84a, in which *hiddur panim* (splendor of face) means beard.

¹³⁸ Cf. *t. Megillah* 3:24.

¹³⁹ Par *y. Sheqalim* 5:2, 49a. Cf. *Leviticus Rabbah* 34:7 (ed. Margalio, 11:783–84).

specifically visual veneration, although Moses is more often regarded as “our rabbi” than as high priest.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, we find this type of visual veneration surfacing later in the passage, first, as offered to a rabbinic sage (called “Sinai” and “holy body” or *gufa tsaddiqa*), and then (erroneously) to R. Me’ir as *hakham*.

The gloss in the final section offers two contrasting perspectives on the motivations of the Israelites’ rising and gazing at Moses in Exodus 33:8. One Amora confirms the notion that seeing is part and parcel of visual piety, allowing one who gazes at a righteous man to attain merit. Seeing the holy man, then, is beneficial for the viewer. Such a perspective is common in rabbinic sources, as we have seen. It also dovetails with depictions of how people lined up to see holy men in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, claiming that the sight of these alone would bring them blessings. However, the second Amora offers a less flattering view of the “righteous one.” Here, Moses is not an icon of the sacred, but a plump picture of corruption. He is scrutinized by a critical Israelite gaze that performs a visual exegesis of his limbs.¹⁴¹ Here is another example of the hostile spectator (mis)interpreting visible signs of sacredness in grossly material terms. Also perhaps lurking here is a critique of visual veneration that stems from anxiety about idolatry.¹⁴²

This discussion of different types of veneration due to the elder, high priest, and leader of Jews (Moses) is followed by:

The ark faces the people, and the priests face the people; and Israel’s faces are turned toward the holy [temple].¹⁴³

This, in turn, is followed by:

R. Ele’azar said, “The Torah does not rise before her son.”¹⁴⁴

Both these traditions concern the physical veneration due to one repository of the sacred (the Torah, the holy temple) from another (the Torah’s son, the

¹⁴⁰ Moses, as the source of Torah (oral and written), is often figured as the prototypical rabbi. The degree of slippage between this biblical narrative and the rabbinic present is made transparent by the term *yehuda’e* (Jews) being used to refer to the Israelites in the biblical narrative. For debate about whether Moses was a priest, see *b. Zevahim* 101b–102a and *y. Yoma* 1:1, 38b; on Moses’ having been denied priesthood, see *Genesis Rabbah* 55:6 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:589).

¹⁴¹ This is echoed later in the passage, in the argument for not rising for non-rabbis who adopt the dress of a leader. In sagely physiognomics there is the quest to detect authenticity and to thus uphold rabbinic authority.

¹⁴² Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 6.

¹⁴³ See *t. Megillah* 3:21–24, which includes (a) the relative seating arrangements of elders, ark, priests, prayer leader, congregation and the temple and (b) a discussion of what is entailed by “rising” and “honoring” in Leviticus 19:32, including the four cubit rule.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. *y. Megillah* 4:1, 74d, for the analogy between rising for a Torah scroll and rising for her son.

people). Six anecdotes then follow, four of which concern sages (“Torah”) stopping their study in order to venerate a “son of the Torah” or old men (*savin*). In one, Hezekiah b. Rabbi, when tired of studying, would “go and sit in front of the assembly house (*be va’ada*) in order to see old men (*savin*) and rise for them.”¹⁴⁵ Perhaps the most significant of these anecdotes for our purposes is the following:

Judah b. Ḥiyya was accustomed to go up and greet R. Yannay his father-in-law every Friday night, and he would sit himself down in a high place, in order to see him and rise before him. His disciples said to him, “Did you not teach us, rabbi, ‘For an elder (*zaqen*) [one stands when he comes within] four cubits?’”¹⁴⁶ He said to them, “There is no [question of] sitting down before Sinai.” On one occasion he [Judah] was late. He [R. Yannay] said, “It is not possible that Judah my son should change his custom.” He said [further], “It is not possible that suffering has come upon that righteous body (*gufa tsaddiqa*). Hence, it is likely that we no longer have Judah my son [with us].”¹⁴⁷

If we recall the teachings above, there were two forms of veneration cited: one for the elder, which involved standing within four cubits; another for the high priest, or Moses, which involved standing upon sight. What we see on the part of R. Yannay, like R. Hezekiah above, is a deliberate seeking out of seeing in order to stand. R. Yannay’s students ask how this conforms to the veneration due to an elder (perhaps Judah was not even an elder, and so the question is compounded). R. Yannay informs them that he extends the honor due to the Torah scholar, or “Sinai,” in whose presence there is no

¹⁴⁵ At first sight, it seems that these old men must not be “elders” as such; however, the assembly house (*be va’ada*) is usually used in the context of a rabbinic place of study (see Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, 93, and Rubenstein, “Social and institutional settings”), so perhaps these refer to elderly rabbis (as opposed to *zeqenim*, who need not actually be elderly). These might be contrasted with the *sav’am ha’aretz*, before whom R. Me’ir would rise. For a similar course of action ascribed to R. Ze’ira, which clearly describes rabbis albeit without visual language, see *b. Berakhot* 28a: “When R. Ze’ira was tired from studying, he used to go and sit by the door of the school of Rav Natan b. Tobi. He said to himself, ‘When the Rabbis pass by, I will rise before them and earn a reward.’”

¹⁴⁶ *T. Megillah* 3:24 transmits this opinion anonymously. Notice also its proximity to the discussion of synagogue decorum and choreography, including who faces what and whom, which also surfaces in *y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65c–d.

¹⁴⁷ The story does not appear in the parallel to this *sugya* in *b. Qiddushin* 33a–b, but it appears in a strikingly different context and form in *b. Ketubot* 61b, in the context of a long discussion about scholars’ fulfillment of conjugal duties. In that version, there is no visual piety between R. Yannay and Judah b. Ḥiyya; rather, people see a pillar of light (*haze’amuda denura*) in front of Judah as he goes home every Friday night to fulfill his conjugal obligations. Whether this fiery pillar signifies his Torah study or his eroticism is ambiguous (Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 149–50; Fraenkel, *Studies*, 102–4; Rubenstein, *Culture*, 104–7).

being seated, even outside of four cubits.¹⁴⁸ A short anecdote that follows has R. Ḥanina striking those who did not rise before him for “nullifying the Torah.” The story about R. Yannay and Judah goes further than this, instigating a shift from responsive ritual to active ritual, in which the sight of the sage and the opportunity to venerate is sought out as a desideratum in and of itself. The appellation “righteous body” (*gufa tsaddiqa*) applied to Judah echoes the earlier Amoraic discussion about the efficacy of seeing Moses – “see a righteous person (*tsaddiqa*) and acquire merit.”

In the same passage we find another anecdote in which “high priestly” piety is offered, this time to R. Me’ir:

When the patriarch (*nasi*) enters, everybody stands before him, and it is not permitted for anyone of them to sit down, until he says to them, “Be seated.” When the head of the court (*av bet din*) enters, they set up rows [of disciples] before him. If he wants, he passes through this row, and if he wants, he passes through that one. When a sage (*hakham*) enters, one stands up and the one before sits down, one stands up and the one before sits down, until he reaches his place and sits.¹⁴⁹

When R. Me’ir would go up to the assembly-house (*bet va’ada*), everyone would look at him (*hamyan leh*) and rise before him. When they heard this Tannaitic teaching [about how a *hakham* is treated], they wanted to treat him in this way; he became angry and left. He said to them, “I have learned that they raise the level but do not lower the level of sanctity (*ma’alin baqodesh velo moridin*).”¹⁵⁰

R. Me’ir is offered the same kind of veneration extended to Moses, clearly based in Exodus 33:8, in which looking is as much part of the piety as the rising. His colleagues learn of a Tannaitic teaching mandating a lesser form of veneration for the *hakham* and wish to apply it to R. Me’ir, who storms out.¹⁵¹ His expression of anger is telling; R. Me’ir invokes a formula applied to cultic and sacred objects, as well as to the fulfillment of

¹⁴⁸ Sinai as a term carries with it the sacred and theophanic connotations of Torah revelation. On the terms “Sinai” versus “uprooter of mountains” (*oqer harim*) in the Babylonian Talmud, see Rubenstein, *Culture*, 47–49. Sinai refers to someone who knows Tannaitic traditions by heart, as opposed to the “uprooter of mountains,” who is a dialectician. See *b. Berakhot* 64a; *b. Megillah* 28b; *b. Horayot* 14a.

¹⁴⁹ Paralleled in *t. Sanhedrin* 7:8. Similar themes of hierarchy, choreography, and veneration emerge in *t. Sanhedrin* 7:9 and 8:1, as well as *m. Sanhedrin* 4:3–4; *t. Megillah* 3:21–26.

¹⁵⁰ *Y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65c. On the relationship between *b. Horayot* 13b and this anecdote, see Cohen, “Patriarchs and scholars,” 85, and Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories*, 176–211. Rubenstein considers *b. Horayot* 13b’s reworking to be “so substantial as to essentially comprise a free composition” (Rubenstein, *Culture*, 192).

¹⁵¹ The type of “high priest” or “Moses” veneration they offer is not included in *t. Sanhedrin* 7:8.

commandments.¹⁵² Having been sanctified by the greater form of veneration, R. Me'ir, like R. Hananyah, who considers lack of veneration to be “annulling the Torah,” understands himself as a sacred object whose sanctity cannot be decreased.¹⁵³

Perhaps the most significant part of *y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65c–d, toward the end of the long passage, is a set of midrashim and anecdotes that speak to honor being denied to non-rabbinic appointees:

R. Mana denigrated those who were appointed for payment of money (*mitmanne bekkhesaf*). R. Immi recited with regard to them, “You shall not make for yourselves gods of silver (*kesef*) or gods of gold” (Exodus 20:20).

R. Josiah said, “And the cloak that he wears [as a symbol of office] is like an ass’s saddle-cloth.” R. Shayan said, “This one who is appointed for in exchange for money, one should not rise before him nor call him rabbi; the cloak that he wears is like an ass’s saddle-cloth.”

R. Ze'ira and one of the rabbis were seated [in study]. One who had been appointed in exchange for money happened to pass by. The rabbi said to R. Ze'ira, “Let us recite [Tannaitic] traditions so as not to rise up before him.”

Jacob of Kefar Nevorayya interpreted the following verse, “Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, ‘Awake!’ To a dumb stone, ‘Arise!’ Can this give instruction?” (Habakkuk 2:19) – does he [the appointee] know how to instruct?!¹⁵⁴ “Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver” (Habakkuk 2:19) – was he not appointed for money (*kaspayya*)?! “And there is no breath in it” (Habakkuk 2:19) – he is not at all knowledgeable (*hakkim*); “Woe to him who says,” I wish to be appointed. But, “God is in his holy temple” (Habakkuk 2:20) – this refers to R. Isaac b. Ele'azar in the synagogue of Madarta in Caesarea.

Here is the expression of rabbinic resentment that non-rabbis are obtaining roles that the rabbis regard as their ritual prerogative.¹⁵⁵ Notice the terms in which these Amoraim mock and disparage “those appointed for money.” The rabbis liken these officials who have obtained their appointments with money (*kaspayya*) to idols of gold and silver (*kesef*). The appointee might look like the genuine thing, wearing the robes and claiming the title

¹⁵² *M. Menahot* 7:11; *b. Shabbat* 21b; *b. Megillah* 21b.

¹⁵³ These two anecdotes, in their expression of intra-rabbinic tension over deference and status, find company with *y. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:7, 83c.

¹⁵⁴ Paralleled in *b. Sanhedrin* 7b.

¹⁵⁵ See Lapin, “Origins and development,” 79. For different suggestions as to the identity of these delegitimated “rabbis” from members of the urban aristocracy to wealthy rabbis to outsiders, see Fine, “Between texts and archaeology,” 9; Miller, *Sages*, 435–44; Hezser, *Social Structure*, 256. Schwartz, *Mediterranean Society*, 193, and Alon, *Jews*, 374–435, see them as outsiders to the rabbinic movement. Hezser, *Social Structure*, 111, emphasizes the ambiguity of the title “rabbi.”

“rabbi,” but their trappings are the saddle-cloth of an ass, and they are in reality nothing more than dumb idols, not sages (*hakkim*) capable of instruction (*yoreh*).¹⁵⁶

If greeting, rising, or other rituals marked the ways in which Palestinian rabbis “constituted a scholastic tradition within which hierarchical relationships between masters and disciples” – and we might add, other intra-rabbinic ranks – “were to be manifested in behavior,”¹⁵⁷ then the discernment and ritual distinction of non-rabbis, the ability to tell icon from idol, was essential to the performance of rabbinic sociality and identity. We are reminded of how one must see (through) outward trappings (robe) and claims (to the title “rabbi”) in order to identify true objects of veneration, which we saw just earlier in the stories of Romans and rabbis in *Y. Berakhot* 5:1, 9a.¹⁵⁸ This social enforcement of veneration is narrated in the story of R. Ze‘ira in a kind of parody of earlier stories in the passage, in which sages break from their study to rise for various other rabbinic figures. Here, R. Ze‘ira and a colleague conspicuously study rather than extend veneration to a non-rabbinic appointee.¹⁵⁹ The story reinforces and enacts the various disparaging critiques of such appointees by ostentatiously disrespecting the non-rabbinic pretender and throwing rabbinic cultural capital (the recitation of traditions) in his face.¹⁶⁰

As in the story of R. Yoḥanan and R. Ele‘azar in *y. Mo‘ed Qatan*, these narratives deploy contrastive logic in order to think about visual piety. The comparison of appropriate veneration toward a rabbinic sage with the dishonor due to idolatry reinforces the legitimate object of veneration’s association with divinity.¹⁶¹ This is made explicit by the crowning contrast in the Jacob of Kefar Nevorayya’s reading of Habakkuk 2:19, in which the

¹⁵⁶ Levine and others suggest that this refers to judicial activity; see Lee I. Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 461. Miller argues that “the use of *yoreh* in the verse . . . suggests instruction of aspects of *halakhah*, either theoretical or practical, there is nothing in the exegesis that suggests that anything more than general instruction in ‘Torah’ (from *y/r/h*) is intended” (Miller, *Sages*, 437). See Shaw, “Askesis,” 485–86, on “the fear of deception by false appearance” and the achievement of identity through “the construction of heretical deviance,” and similarly, Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 102.

¹⁵⁷ Lapin, “Origins and development,” 79, where he cites *y. Berakhot* 2:1, 4b, and *y. Mo‘ed Qatan* 3:7, 83c. Lapin continues: “Palestinian rabbinic works reflect tensions with other forms of Jewish teaching (*minim* or ‘heretics’) as well as with other elites, especially the Patriarchs and their clients, and the Rabbis jealously preserve what they considered their ritual prerogatives.”

¹⁵⁸ We see hints of this problem in the case of Moses above: the very same body can be looked at “as merit” and “as disapproval.”

¹⁵⁹ Cf. the story of Rabbi Yoḥanan and the prefect in *y. Berakhot* 5:1, 9a.

¹⁶⁰ Compare *b. Qiddushin* 31b and 33a–b. Other examples in the Bavli of rising for a rabbi or a *bar uryan* include *b. Berakhot* 28a; *b. Makkot* 22b; see *b. Shabbat* 31b and *b. Menahot* 53a. For Babylonian Amoraim deliberately not rising, see *b. Gittin* 31b, 62a.

¹⁶¹ The policing of boundaries seems important here; the words imply that others probably did acknowledge the authority of such people. The politics of exclusion are joined to the ability to interpret the visible manifestations of sageliness.

prophet's critique of the emptiness of idols ("false" public officials), who are no sages and who cannot instruct, is juxtaposed with Habakkuk 2:20 – "God is in his holy temple," which is related to R. Isaac b. Ele'azar in the Madarta synagogue in Caesarea. The true sage is thus not only a stand-in for Sinaitic revelation or Torah, but is akin to God himself.

Y. Bikkurim 3:3, 65c–d thus offers insight into some of the basic mechanics of ritual gestures toward various classes of rabbinic figures, some of which comport with those offered by Romans in *y. Berakhot* 5:1, 9a. For our purposes, it points to a particularly visual type of piety toward the sage as a personification of Torah. With its discussion of nonrabbinic appointees, it contrasts appropriate denigration toward these figures with the appropriate norms of piety toward the worthy, who ultimately are likened to God. The passage thus tells us about the rabbis' refusal to recognize the authority of certain nonrabbinic leaders, even as they elevated their own. The web of obligation in this particular kind of piety is very much an intra-rabbinic affair, and in some sense this was the point. Unlike Christian hagiographic writings, which picture people lining up to set their eyes upon skinny Syrian stylites or Egyptian or Palestinian monks, rabbinic writings are not at pains to paint sage icons as having extensive reach outside of rabbinic circles.

Seeing sages in Babylonia

What about visual veneration among rabbinic sages in Babylonia? We can learn a few things by looking at *b. Qiddushin* 33a–b, the Babylonian pericope most closely parallel to *y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65d. Set amidst commentary on *m. Qiddushin* 1:7, which treats the obligations between father and son and then transitions to the relative honor due to sage and patriarch, the Bavli launches into a dissection of Leviticus 19:32. It establishes that:

Zaqen can only refer to a *hakham*, for it says, "Gather for me seventy of the elders of Israel" (Numbers 11:16). R. Yose the Galilean said, "*Zaqen* is none other than he who has acquired (*qanah*) wisdom, for it says: 'The Lord created (*qanani*) me [Wisdom] at the beginning of his course'" (Proverbs 8:22).

In several places the Bavli substitutes the Yerushalmi's elder (*zaqen*) for a disciple of the sages (*talmid hakham*). For example in *b. Qiddushin* 33b, we find:

R. Aibu said, R. Yannay said, "A disciple of a sage (*talmid hakham*) may only rise before his master (*rabbo*) in the morning and evening (*shaharit ve'arvit*), so that his glory may not exceed the glory of heaven." An objection is raised:

R. Shim'on b. Ele'azar said, "How do we know that an elder must not impose? From the verse, 'Elder' . . . 'and you shall fear'" (Leviticus 19:32) . . .

R. Ele'azar said, "Every disciple of a sage (*talmid ḥakham*) who does not rise before his master (*rabbo*) is called wicked, will not live long, and will forget his learning (*talmudo*)."¹⁶²

Like the Yerushalmi, the Bavli discusses limits on veneration in terms of the relative honor due to God. Unlike the Yerushalmi, it slips back and forth between the veneration due by a disciple to his master and that due to an elder. Furthermore, it states, in the name of R. Ele'azar, that one's study, and thus status as a scholar, can be irreparably damaged by not showing appropriate veneration to one's master.

B. Qiddushin 33a–b integrates a variety of sources found in Tannaitic literature and the Palestinian Talmud.¹⁶³ The following is an example of how the Bavli "Babylonianizes" some of the Palestinian elements here, by replacing Palestinian Amoraim with Babylonian sages. It is also one of the few examples in which *b. Qiddushin* 33a–b considers intra-rabbinic veneration in visual terms per se:

- (A) A *tanna* taught, "What [type of] rising shows glory (*hiddur*)? One would say it is [within] four cubits."¹⁶⁴
- (B) Abbaye said, "This applies only for one who is not his illustrious teacher (*rabbo she'eno muvhaq*), but for his illustrious teacher (*rabbo hamuvhaq*), [he should rise when he is in] his full field of vision (*melo 'enav*)."
- (C) Abbaye used to rise as soon as he saw (*haze*) the ear of Rav Joseph's donkey approaching.
- (D) Abbaye was riding a donkey, making his way on the bank of the river Sagya. Rav Mesharsheya and other scholars (*rabbanan*) were sitting on the opposite bank, and they did not rise before him. He said to them, "Am I not [your] illustrious teacher?" They replied to him, "We were not paying proper attention."¹⁶⁵

The narrative does not elide *zagen* and *talmid ḥakham*, but it does something even more specific: It applies Leviticus 19:32 to the veneration due to one's master. As a whole, the sequence combines narrative elements of *y. Bikkurim*'s anecdote about R. Yannay's long-distance visual veneration of

¹⁶² E.g. *b. Qiddushin* 33a: "Artisans may not rise before scholars while engaged in their work . . . R. Yoḥanan said, 'They must stand up before them [pilgrims], yet before scholars, they may not . . . ' R. Yose b. Abin said, 'Come and see how beloved a precept is in its time; for they rose up before them [pilgrims], yet not before scholars.'" Cf. *y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65c: "R. Yose b. R. Abun in the name of R. Huna b. Ḥiyya, 'Come and see how great is the strength of those who fulfill *mitsvot*, for before a *zagen* they [artisans] do not rise, but before those who fulfill *mitsvot* they do rise."

¹⁶³ E.g. *y. Kil'ayim* 9:4, 32b. ¹⁶⁴ *T. Megillah* 3:24. ¹⁶⁵ *B. Qiddushin* 33a.

Judah b. Ḥiyya, together with the anecdote about the veneration of Moses and R. Me'ir, which are in turn based on the veneration due to the high priest.¹⁶⁶

In the Yerushalmi, R. Yannay is questioned by his students for going above and beyond the minimal four-cubit requirement to rise. Here, too, Abbaye stretches the minimal four-cubit requirement. He does so, however, in very Babylonian terms; that is, in terms that are relative and within the scholastic hierarchy. Whereas the Yerushalmi explains visual veneration in terms of Sinai (Judah b. Ḥiyya, Moses) or sanctity (Moses, R. Me'ir), the emphasis in the Bavli is on the scholastic aspects of the relationship.

The anecdote is not without humor. Abbaye is extremely scrupulous in his interpretation of *melo 'enayim*, "the full extent of the eyes," extending the honor due to Moses or the *nasi* to Rav Joseph and rising at the merest visible hint of his teacher (or even his donkey).¹⁶⁷ Despite his teaching and scrupulous attention to appropriate forms of veneration, he experiences his students' failure to rise as an affront (compare to R. Me'ir's anger in the Yerushalmi). Does the story serve to chastise those who institute and expect too much veneration? After all, the notion found in *y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65c–d that one might seek the sight of particular sages in order to honor them is absent from *b. Qiddushin* 33a–b. On the other hand, immediately following this anecdote, we are told that Abbaye recommended taking a circuitous route to avoid people in order not to trouble them by making them rise; one who does so, according to Abbaye, merits long life. The text goes on to tell us that he practiced what he preached.

While the Bavli upholds and extends veneration of the elder in very specific ways to the teacher (*rav*), and unequivocally equates it to the fear and honor due to God, it is far less emphatic about the visibility of such veneration in this passage. Furthermore, besides the Abbaye anecdote above, other parallels emphasizing visual piety in the Yerushalmi do not appear in their Babylonian reworkings.¹⁶⁸ Perhaps the trends visible here

¹⁶⁶ This unit derives from *t. Megillah* 3:15, *t. Sanhedrin* 7:8, and three elements of *y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65d: (1) the statement of R. Avdimi of the differential honor due to the high priest (from when he appears until he is concealed) and the sage (four cubits); (2) R. Yannay's visual veneration of Judah from afar beyond four cubits; and (3) the tradition about differential honor given to the patriarch, chief justice, and sage, the honor accorded to R. Me'ir (they would gaze at him and rise before him), and his anger upon its retraction.

¹⁶⁷ This language of *melo 'enayim* surfaces again toward the end of *b. Qiddushin* 33b in an abbreviated description of the honor due to the *av bet din* and *nasi*, which is embedded (along with that due to the *hakham*) in the description of the veneration given to Moses in Exodus 33:8. On (*merhaq*) *melo 'enayim* versus (*merhaq*) *arba' amot*, see *b. Berakhot* 26a.

¹⁶⁸ E.g. *b. Horayot* 13b, which parallels R. Me'ir's fall; *b. Ketubot* 61b, which parallels R. Yannay's veneration of Judah b. Ḥiyya; *b. Sanhedrin* 7b, which parallels the denigration of nonrabbinic appointees and the application of Habakkuk 2:19–20.

of the Bavli subordinating visual piety to different concerns, such as the upholding of hierarchy and scholasticism, echo the kinds of differences we noted earlier between *b. Eruvin* 13b and *y. Betsah* 5:2, 63a. The Palestinian sources emphasize the efficacy of visual sanctity; the Babylonian sources highlight visual apprehension of hierarchy and scholasticism.

However, these differences are not set in stone. We have Babylonian sources that do treat sages as icons of the sacred to whom veneration is due.¹⁶⁹ We saw an example of such in *b. Hagigah* 5a. Additional evidence of a Babylonian ritualization of the encounter with the sage is found in *b. Berakhot* 58b. Here, the Bavli reports ostensibly Tannaitic traditions about blessings to be said upon the sight of sages (*hakhamim*), distinguishing between different formulae depending on whether they are Jewish or gentile sages.¹⁷⁰ This blessing for Jewish sages is added in the Bavli to the collection of sight-triggered blessings rooted in *m. Berakhot* 9:1 and *t. Berakhot* 6:2. As discussed in the previous chapter, these include a variety of sights from the marine, arboreal, and meteorological to the human. The Bavli presents many additional sight-blessings besides those of the Mishnah and Tosefta. However, these are followed by a story featuring fourth-century Babylonian Amoraim, in which a pair of sages and another sage see and bless each other, with fatal results due to the malevolent gaze of the pair of sages.¹⁷¹ This narrative may also serve as a cautionary tale about ostentatious displays of veneration toward and among sages. On the other hand, sageliness and discernment is emphasized as much as seeing in the narration, together with one-upmanship; here, we may have another example, even if in ambivalent terms, of Babylonian intellectual competitiveness.

¹⁶⁹ Even *b. Qiddushin* 33b includes a reading of the obligation to stand for the sage that is grounded in “fear of God.” Another example is *b. Berakhot* 17b: “Rav Ashi said, ‘The people of Mata Mehasya are strong-hearted, for they see the glory of the Torah twice a year, and never has one of them been converted.’”

¹⁷⁰ *B. Berakhot* 58b: “Our rabbis taught: One who sees Jewish sages (*hakhme yisra’el*) says, ‘Blessed is the one who apportioned his wisdom to those who fear him.’ One who sees the sages of other nations says, ‘Blessed is the one who apportioned his wisdom to flesh and blood.’”

¹⁷¹ *B. Berakhot* 58b: “Rav Papa and Rav Huna b. Rav Joshua were traveling on the road and met Rav Hanina b. Rav Iqa. They said to him, ‘When we saw you (*hazinakh*), we made two blessings over you: “Blessed is the one who apportioned his wisdom (*hokhmato*) to those who fear him,” and, “That he has renewed us [and sustained us and brought us to this moment].” He said to them, ‘When I saw you, I thought of you as equal to six hundred thousand Israelites, and I made three blessings over you: those two and “Blessed is the one who knows secrets (*hakham harazim*).”’ They said to him, ‘Are you quite so clever (*hakkimat kule ha’y*)?’ The cast their eyes upon him (*yahave beh ‘enayhu*), and he died.” Perhaps Rav Hanina has offended his colleagues by his one-upmanship, or perhaps they gaze at him with an evil eye as a result of his overly overt display of sageliness. Note the thematically and textually proximate story at *b. Berakhot* 58a, in which Rav Sheshet shows off his superior vision (though he is physically blind) to a supercilious *min*, whom he also eviscerates with his gaze.

Another example of Babylonian ritualization of intra-rabbinic piety is *b. Yoma* 53a. This pericope places the leave-taking rituals of (Palestinian) Amoraim in the analogical context of the rules of entry and exit of the temple grounds, including those governing how the high priest enters and exits the holy of holies:¹⁷²

In similar fashion [to Solomon leaving and returning to Jerusalem], the priests as they ministered, the Levites at their service, and the Israelites at their posts [would take leave of the temple]: As they left they would not turn their faces and leave (*maḥazirin penehen veholekḥin*), rather they would turn their faces sideways (*metsaddedin penehen*) to leave. So, too, a disciple taking leave of his master must not turn his face back and leave, but must turn sideways to depart.¹⁷³

The basic etiquette is to not turn one's back on the sacred or the superior, but to keep one's face, and thus one's gaze, turned toward it or him. The Talmud goes on to describe the gravity with which the third-century Palestinian Amora R. Ele'azar and the fourth-century Babylonian Amora Rava took this veneration:

For this was so with R. Ele'azar when he took leave of R. Yoḥanan. He would rise [while going] backwards, until he was concealed from R. Yoḥanan.¹⁷⁴ When R. Yoḥanan would leave, R. Ele'azar would bow and stand still in his place until R. Yoḥanan disappeared from his sight.¹⁷⁵

Rava, when he took his leave of Rav Joseph's house, would go backwards, so that his feet were bruised and the threshold of the house of Rav Joseph was stained with blood.¹⁷⁶

Here the Bavli accomplishes a complete reversal of the Palestinian story of R. Ele'azar's apparent lack of deference toward R. Yoḥanan by presenting him as taking extreme measures of visual piety toward his

¹⁷² The mishnaic phrase that serves as the base text, regarding the high priest on Yom Kippur, is, "He came out the way he entered" (*m. Yoma* 5:1). The Talmud follows with an interpretation of Solomon's entry and exit into Jerusalem: "Just as his face was directed toward the 'high place' when he came to Gibeon from Jerusalem, like when he entered; in the same way, when he left Gibeon for Jerusalem, his face was turned toward the high place, like when he entered." It then follows with the segment quoted regarding priests and Levites' modes of departure. Cf. *m. Sukkah* 5:4.

¹⁷³ *B. Yoma* 53a.

¹⁷⁴ The language here echoes the "disappearing" and "concealment" in *y. Bikkurim* and *b. Qiddushin*, where the high priest must disappear from one's vision before one may sit. Note that this may be the Bavli's reworking and elimination of the conflict about the greeting ritual in *y. Berakhot* 4:1, 2b; *y. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:7, 83c; *y. Sheqalim* 2:6, 47a.

¹⁷⁵ Mss. London, Munich 6, Munich 95 and New York/JTS have *minneh* not *me'eneh*, i.e. "from him," rather than the more explicitly visual, "from his eyes." Cf. Sokoloff, *Babylonian Aramaic*, 591.

¹⁷⁶ *B. Yoma* 53a.

teacher.¹⁷⁷ However, Rava goes even further, with the rather graphic description of his bruised feet leaving trails of blood on his teacher's threshold. The passage continues its analogy of disciple–teacher and human–sacred: Rav Joseph blesses Rava for his veneration and compares the ritual leave-taking of God after the *'amidah* prayer to a disciple taking leave of his master.¹⁷⁸

Given this short survey, we can say that both the Yerushalmi and the Bavli pay attention to visual piety among sages and that the Bavli seems to reflect genuine Babylonian engagement with such practices, even beyond preserving some of the Palestinian stories and laws. Some of the Babylonian sources conform to the intellectualizing, competitive, and hierarchical pattern we noted earlier, while others seem to caution against or satirize excessive visual piety. Yet other sources, such as *b. Yoma* 53a, seem to valorize such practices, even when carried out to excess.

Conclusion

In these pages, we have examined a variety of Palestinian and Babylonian sources for what they tell us about how rabbis constructed the sage as an icon of the sacred. We moved from sources that treated the sight of the sage as a form of revelation, as Torah, and as divinity worthy of visual pilgrimage, to those that treat its scholastic efficacy. This brought us to the social functions of the “physiognomics of the sacred.” This allowed us to explore how visual veneration is narrated among and between rabbis and on the part of Roman officials. Throughout we have sought to compare Palestinian and Babylonian sources and to highlight points of convergence with nonrabbinic sources. This survey has not been exhaustive. We did not touch on the fascinating preoccupation (particularly in Palestinian sources) with “seeing” the sage after his death – arguably a rabbinic cult of the dead.¹⁷⁹ We did not touch on the fatal ocular power granted to

¹⁷⁷ In fact, *b. Yevamot* 96b–97a, a Babylonian parallel to *y. Berakhot* 2:1, 4b (and *y. Mo'ed Qatan*, 3:7, 83c), recounts only R. Yoḥanan's taking offense at R. Ele'azar not citing his teaching by name, completely omitting R. Ele'azar's lack of visual piety.

¹⁷⁸ For the interpretation of the accusative particle *et* in, “Fear the Lord your God (*et-YHVH elohekhā tira*)” (Deuteronomy 6:13) as including fear of Torah scholars in the injunction to fear God, see *b. Bava Qamma* 41b (paralleled in *b. Pesahim* 22b; *b. Qiddushin* 57a; *b. Bekhorot* 6b).

¹⁷⁹ On rabbis fasting in order to “see” saintly (dead) sages, see the series of anecdotes in *y. Ketubot* 12:3, 35a, and parallels: “R. Yose fasted eighty days to see (*lemehyme*) the R. Ḥiyya Rabbah. In the end, he saw (*hama*) him, but his hands trembled and his eyes were dimmed. If you say that R. Yose was not a significant man, a weaver came to R. Yoḥanan and said . . . ‘R. Shim'on b. Laqish fasted three hundred fasts to see R. Ḥiyya Rabbah but did not see him.’” Compare the parallel *b. Bava Metsi'a* 85b, in which a rabbi has visions of dead rabbis in the heavenly academy but is struck by two flames that blind him when he disobeys Elijah's instruction not to gaze upon the carriage of R. Ḥiyya.

sages, particularly, but not exclusively, in the Bavli.¹⁸⁰ Nor did we return to the luminous beauty granted to R. Yoḥanan and the divine, bearded beauty granted to R. Abbahu and Rav Kahana in the Bavli amidst our discussions of sagely radiance. However, even in the sample of sources surveyed, certain themes and patterns have emerged, whose implications we will now consider.

Sage as visible Torah

We observed that the rabbis depict the sage as Torah and as divinity. That the rabbis depict sages as Torah incarnate is perhaps not surprising. The sage is sanctified in terms of the rabbinic project itself. What better way to authorize and enshrine the rabbinic claim to the authority of Torah interpretation than to embody its (and thus, their) teachings? Unlike Tannaitic and many later sources, this motif marks the sage not just by his association with or study of Torah, but by his identity with Torah. Torah is thus learned from viewing the body and actions of the sage himself, whether from his nape or toes, how he conducts himself in the privy, or how he comports himself during prayer. The sage transmits Torah not through writing or “by mouth,” but through the eyes. Surely this dovetails with what Martin Jaffee has called the “face-to-face” encounter of disciple and sage that was the foundational relational unit of the rabbinic movement.¹⁸¹ The sage as a teacher of Torah becomes the ultimate embodiment and visible manifestation of the divine word. The pieties due to scroll and God are transferred to the master by his disciple.¹⁸²

There are, however, significant differences between Palestinian and Babylonian versions of the sage as visible Torah. These seem to correspond to different cultures of sociality, institutionalization, and scholasticism. Put simply, we have the sense of greater intimacy, even conflict and tension, in the Palestinian depictions. Babylonian stories most often invoke the divine in contexts that emphasize scholarly brilliance and competition. In pictorial terms, we might compare the Yerushalmi’s narratives of sage–divine visibility to the earthy tones and painterly handling of Rembrandt or even Lucian Freud; the Bavli’s sharpness brings to mind the colder tones and

¹⁸⁰ For example: *b. Berakhot* 58a, 58b; *b. Mo’ed Qatan* 17b; *b. Nedarim* 7b; *b. Sotah* 46b; *b. Bava Batra* 14a, 75a; *b. Ta’anit* 9a; *b. Sanhedrin* 100a; *b. Shabbat* 34a; *Genesis Rabbah* 79:18 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 11:945); *Pesiqta Derav Kahana* 11:16 (ed. Mandelbaum, 1:193), 18:5 (ed. Mandelbaum, 1:298).

¹⁸¹ Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 97, 142, 151.

¹⁸² For this association, see *y. Mo’ed Qatan* 3:7, 83b.

luminosity of Vermeer, the clean lines and precision of Gerhard Richter's hyper-real paintings.

Divine icon, mnemonic image, and community boundaries

Perhaps more surprising is the choice, in Babylonian and Palestinian sources, to figure the sage as a vision of God. While some sources uphold this equation even beyond the sage's ability to teach, it seems that the identification primarily works to support the sage's claim to transmit God's word. The intersection of divinity and divine revelation or teaching in a human person is not unprecedented in Jewish or Christian thought.¹⁸³ Both Palestinian and Babylonian sources describe veneration of the sage as based in forms of divine veneration, whether by directly comparing sages to God in his temple or by equating rituals of taking leave of the sage to prayer choreography. While the idea that seeing the sage or teacher enhanced one's study is not unique to the rabbis, it is notable that neither Bavli nor Yerushalmi hesitates to cast the sight of the sage as a useful scholastic, mnemonic device, while relating this to the sight of God.

The Bavli, however, may express discomfort with some excessive forms of veneration through its comical tale of the offended Abbaye. Furthermore, one could argue that, while *b. Hagigah* 5b substitutes the face of the sage for the face of God, it is nonetheless clear that this is just a place-holder and one that points to the lack of direct access to God himself. Perhaps the hesitation of the Bavli is informed by what Patricia Cox Miller describes as the specter of idolatry.¹⁸⁴ In some sense, the Yerushalmi puts this specter to rest quite explicitly by contrasting proper visual veneration to the sage with the impiety due to the actual idolatrous image (as in the case of R. Yoḥanan and R. Ele'azar) or with the disrespect due to faux-rabbis (those "appointed in exchange for money") cast as dumb idols rather than divine sages.

This concern with idolatry, seen in other cases in Palestinian texts, brings us to the role of vision in defining, expressing, and upholding the boundaries of the rabbinic community. Those who can see sages properly

¹⁸³ See, e.g., Philo's identification of holy persons, Abraham and Moses, as the Law: Philo, *De Abrahamo*, 5–6, 276; *De Vita Mosis* 1.162; John 1:1–18. Similarly, Jerome tells us that Paula believed that she "saw Christ himself" in holy men, thus beholding versions of the "Word made flesh."

¹⁸⁴ See Miller, "Little blue flower," 216. Perhaps the Bavli, with its investment in the visual power and acuity of sagely vision (e.g. *b. Berakhot* 58a–b), is operating in a religious framework that values *da'na* (religion, or, lit. "vision") and the ability to train the "eye of the soul" (*casn i gyan*) to perceive the *mēnōg* (invisible) aspects of the world (Shaked, "Quests.")

are insiders as much as those who are seen to be sages. This also means knowing when someone is *not* a sage. This physiognomic gaze dovetails with a relatively insular picture of Amoraic Palestinian culture. As a whole, the narratives and legal debates do not strain to portray pious laypeople lining up to set their eyes on rabbis; nor do the rabbis look beyond their own community. The sage as icon largely serves rabbinic needs. This is different from the way Christian holy men are depicted as channels of the sacred, drawing a variety of lay visitors, followers, and clients.¹⁸⁵ Perhaps the pagan holy man, particularly in his form as philosopher, functions as a better analog to the rabbinic sage icon.¹⁸⁶

Political icons

How, then, to understand the narrative energy in which rabbis are imagined to reverse Roman expectations of veneration? The well-crafted set of anecdotes in *y. Berakhot* 6:1, 9a expresses themes of a piece with those in *y. Betsah* 5:2, 63a (R. Me'ir and Rabbi), *y. Pesahim* 10:1, 37c (R. Judah b. Ila'i, R. Abbahu), and *y. Berakhot* 2:1, 4b (R. Yoḥanan and R. Ele'azar) – all narratives in which failures or misunderstandings about visual piety are resolved – but here the other protagonist is the Roman viewer. I read these narratives not as reflections on rabbinic recognition by Roman officials in Palestine and elsewhere, but rather as projections of the rabbinic desire for such recognition. What is interesting, for our purposes, is that the medium of expression is vision and its ritual marking of veneration. Is it a coincidence that some of the motifs in these stories find echoes in Christian depictions of holy men encountering imperial power? Are rabbis staking their claim as icons of the sacred in the imperial realms vis-à-vis similar Christian claims? Does Ursicinus' vision of R. Jonah and R. Yose counter Constantine's vision, or is it just a throwback to Jewish legends about Alexander and the high priest? Certainly, rabbinic fantasies about

¹⁸⁵ See the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Arsenius, 28 (*Patrologia Latina* 858C–859B; *Patrologia Graeca* 65:96–97), trans. Ward, *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 55: a rich virgin travels to see Arsenius, who is reluctant to be seen; she declares, “I believe that with the help of God I will see him. In my city of Rome there are many people to see, but I have come here in order to see saints”; eventually, she gets to see him, but Arsenius reprimands her, saying, “Have you heard about my way of life? This is what you should be trying to see . . . Have you done this so that you can go back to Rome and say to the other women, ‘I have seen Arsenius?’ In that way you will turn the sea into a highway with women coming to see me.”

¹⁸⁶ On the exclusivity, in terms of class, education, and privilege, of the pagan holy man or philosopher and his relative social marginalization compared to his Christian counterpart, see Fowden, “Pagan holy man”; Brown, *Philosopher and Society*; Francis, *Subversive Virtue*.

Roman imperial recognition suffice to make this passage legible, but these other possibilities tantalize.

Palestine and Babylonia

Many of the stories treated in this chapter, particularly the Palestinian ones, find echoes in late-antique visual pieties toward holy men in pagan and Christian sources. Their protagonists are often third- and fourth-century Amoraim.¹⁸⁷ What should be made of this? Moreover, the Palestinian stories set up the sage as a visual object, worthy to be seen, an essential vehicle guiding both the student of Torah and the reproduction of Torah knowledge, but they also often dramatize tension and conflict. What ensues, and often provides a narrative resolution, is a thick sense of the sacred, whether expressed as the nape that reveals all Torah or fire that blinds would-be Roman attackers. Rabbinic bodies, visually perceptible containers of the word of God and aflame with divine radiance, cannot be understood apart from such visible manifestations of the sacred in the Roman East. From Porphyry's descriptions of Plotinus' radiance while teaching to Eunapius' description of Iamblichus' luminescence while praying to Iamblichus' account of how Pythagoreans approached their master first through hearing and only then through the privilege of sight, the desire for "visible holiness" that was already in place only intensified when empire and church converged in the fourth century.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ When I charted patterns of attribution, protagonists, editorial reshaping of the main sources discussed and referenced in this chapter (sage as visual Torah: *y. Betsah* 5:2, 63a, *b. 'Eruvin* 13b; sage and visual mnemonics: *y. Shabbat* 1:2, 3a, *Leviticus Rabbah* 20:1, *b. Horayot* 12a, *b. Shabbat* 145a, *b. Hullin* 137b; sagely physiognomics: *Sifre Deuteronomy* 343, *Song of Songs Rabbah* 6:17, *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:19, *y. Pesahim* 10:1, 37c, *y. Ketubot* 12:3, 35a; rabbis and Romans: *y. Berakhot* 5:1, *b. Berakhot* 32b–33a, 9a, *y. Pesahim* 10:1, 37c, *b. Ketubot* 17a; intra-rabbinic visual piety: *y. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:7, 83c, *y. Ketubot* 12:3, 35a, *b. Qiddushin* 33a, *y. Bikkurim* 3:3, 65c–d; sage as pilgrimage site: *y. 'Eruvin* 5:1, 22b, *b. Sukkah* 27b, *b. Hagigah* 5b), no obvious generational trends emerged beyond those discussed. Palestinian sources deploy a mix of pseudepigraphic Tannaitic anecdotes and Tannaitic teachings, along with a significant number of attributions and protagonists of first- to fourth-generation Amoraim. The Bavli parallels often drop visual references, or deploy them differently, and feature Palestinian Tannaim and Amoraim (albeit heavily reworked or Babylonianized) along with Babylonian Amoraim of the first to fifth generations. Both Palestinian and Babylonian sources feature a preponderance of third- to fourth-century Amoraim (more Babylonian Amoraim in the Bavli).

¹⁸⁸ On Plotinus, see Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 13: "When he (Plotinus) was speaking, his intellect visibly illuminated his face; always of winning presence, he became at these times still more engaging: a slight moisture gathered on his forehead; he radiated benignity" (trans. Mackenna, 9). On Iamblichus, see Eunapius, *Vitae Sophistarum* (Maximus). On Pythagorus, see *Vita Pythagorica* 15. The above are all cited and quoted in Kirschner, "Vocation of holiness." On Eunapius' presentation of Iamblichus as spiritual and possessed of supernatural powers, miracle worker, floating and transfigured with light when he prayed, see Fowden, "Pagan holy man," 8.

The finer distinctions between Babylonian and Palestinian conceptions of the sage icon are perhaps easier to note than to explain fully.¹⁸⁹ The tensions elicited by visual piety in Palestinian sources are not of such interest to the Babylonians; they are mostly edited out of the Bavli's versions of these stories, which feature Babylonianized Palestinian rabbis or Babylonian sages. Furthermore, the preoccupation with the embodied sanctity of the sage is less intense: The primary concern is with scholastic technique, brilliance, and hierarchy.¹⁹⁰ The concern with relative hierarchy is not absent in the Yerushalmi – for example, R. Yishma'el's jealousy of and offense at R. Hiyya in *y. Ketubot* 12:3, 35a. However, the impression fostered by some of the conflicts in the Yerushalmi around “greeting one's teacher or superior in learning” is that they occur in a tighter-knit, more informal context of sociality, whereas the Bavli seems to reflect a more formalized social context, in which conflict is to be minimized.¹⁹¹

It is possible to account for some of these differences in terms of regional differences in visual piety. Thus, locating the Palestinian rabbis in the Mediterranean Christian Roman empire helps us to assess specific inflections of their piety, such as their greater concern with the embodied sanctity of the sage and their greater anxiety about idolatry. What of the sensibilities afoot in late-antique Mesopotamia? As scholars have shown, Babylonian rabbis were culturally as much a part of the Roman East as they were of the

¹⁸⁹ For an analysis that links Aphrahat's understanding of the holy man, particularly in *Demonstration* 14, with *merkavah* literature, see Golitzin, “Place of the presence,” who uncovers in the course of his analysis the light, vision, and theophany imagery in Aphrahat's representation of the perfected Christian, the sage or *hakkima*. Certainly light and vision were important motifs in the writings of Mesopotamian Christian sages, such as Aphrahat, Ephrem, and Narsai. Precisely how to weigh these conceptions and how or whether to distinguish them from cultural conceptions coming from even further west, whether from Jewish or Christian sources, if the two can be properly separated, is a question worthy of further study.

¹⁹⁰ Despite the fact that the Babylonian parallel to the exposure and transmission of knowledge in *y. Betsab* 5:2, 63a, in *b. Erubin* 13b, foregoes all hints of eroticism, we note that the Babylonian Talmud is not without its own erotic iconic sage (in the figure of R. Yoḥanan in *b. Bava Metsi'a* 84b). While Rabbi Yoḥanan's eroticism and visuality are clearly associated with his learning, by his own declaration and by the dynamics of the narrative, the ambiguity of his success as a teacher may express, as Richard Kalmin has noted, a Babylonian critique of Palestinian scholasticism. Following this line of reasoning, one might see the Babylonian storytellers projecting their ambivalence (fascination, desire, and fear) about the more eroticized, rather than purely scholastic, forms of sagely iconicity onto the figure of R. Yoḥanan. For the pervasive hierarchy in the Bavli, see Kalmin, *Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors*, chs. 10–11.

¹⁹¹ The Babylonian Talmud seems more cautious about the embodied sanctity or visual veneration toward the sage; even if the sage's power is understood, in visual and visible terms it seems more related to status, hierarchy, and scholasticism. Thus, we can read *b. Berakhot* 58b as a Babylonian critique of visual veneration as such, even as it is expressed in terms of brilliance.

Persian Sassanian empire.¹⁹² Moreover, that many of the Babylonian anecdotes feature third- and fourth-century Babylonian Amoraim, and that the parallels featuring Palestinian Amoraim and Tannaim are Babylonianized is evidence of genuine Babylonian engagement with the sage as icon beyond a mere interest in the preservation of Palestinian lore. Indeed, we do have some indications of a kind of sage icon in Zoroastrian sources:

Know the truth of the Mazdean religion. The wise can see it in the material world with confidence. It is possible (however) to become of supreme sanctity and a foremost leader essentially not by deliberation, but through purity of thought, speech and action, (by) being kind to the good spirit, and (by) worship of the gods in purity through the holy word. We definitely call those persons ‘mobads of Ohrmazd’ who have made manifest to us the vision of *mēnōg*. We insistently request of them vision of *mēnōg* in an abundantly explicit manner, as well as its *gētīg* measure (brought about) by manifestation, both these kinds in complete measure.¹⁹³

Here, the Zoroastrian priest makes “manifest to us the vision of *mēnōg*” that “aspect of the world that is essentially mental, invisible, and intangible.”¹⁹⁴ The truth of Mazdean religion (*daena*, lit. “vision”), made visible by the Zoroastrian priest, is the truth of complete reality in its tangible, visible aspects of *gētīg* and in its spiritual aspect of *mēnōg*.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, Zoroastrian sources consider the wise person as a “mirror” in which a person ought to gaze to see and improve himself.¹⁹⁶ We do not know exactly how such notions might have reached or impacted rabbis living in Mesopotamia, but it is clear that in this realm, as well as others, many of the rich specificities of Babylonian rabbinic culture that filter down to us through the Bavli are inflected and informed in ways that we are only beginning to imagine.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*.

¹⁹³ *Dēnkard* iv.22 (*DkM*. 413, trans. in Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation*, 104). We can also consider the preoccupation further east in Buddhist and Hindu sources with *darśan* (lit. vision, understood as a reciprocal visual experience with a deity, image or holy person); see Gonda, *Eye and Gaze*; Schopen, *Bones, Stones*, 114–47; Kinnard, “The field of the Buddha’s presence.” For an ancient Hindu example of an injunction for a student to sit facing his teacher and gaze at his face, see *Manusmṛiti* 1:192–93. *Xwarrah*, meaning glory or luminosity (connected to *xūar*, sun), was a substance and force attributed to Ohrmazd, Zoroaster, the luminaries, gods, kings, and priests. See sources in Chapter 4, n. 223.

¹⁹⁴ Shaked, “Mēnōg and gētīg.” See also *Dādestān ī dēnīg*, 2 (ed. Jaafari-Dehaghi, 42–43) in which “great light worm” by righteous men is likened to the sun’s light.

¹⁹⁵ We might read *b. Berakhot* 58b, in which the sightless Rav Sheshet out-sees the *min*, in this light.

¹⁹⁶ This visual notion of modeling or mirroring is found in the *Dēnkard* vi.223–24: “In teaching one’s fellow this one thing is best: That a man discipline his character, make a mirror of himself and hold it in front of his fellows. The other man looks at it, sees it and learns from it” (*Wisdom*, trans. Shaked, 87; for Shaked’s translation of 224, see Chapter 1, n. 99).

¹⁹⁷ Another example of the cultural intersection of Babylonia and Persia concerns the trope of light or fire as a form of sagely or sacred visibility. We can speculate, as discussed, that the Bavli’s tendency

We can recognize many of the elements of late-antique piety familiar from Greco-Roman and Christian discourse, in which visual language, thinking, and objects are so ubiquitous in efforts to grasp and preserve the holy and to stimulate its imitation and reproduction.

Seeing bodies

Rabbinic sources, both Palestinian and Babylonian, appropriate, naturalize, and express visual piety in rabbinized terms. However, if in the Christian East such sensibilities ultimately led to a cult of material icons (in other words, paintings of holy people), this did not arise in rabbinic circles. What Georgia Frank said of late-antique Christian pilgrims going to see the “living holy” cannot be applied to the rabbis: “By this tactile and conjuring eye of faith, pilgrims articulated a theology of vision that would find its fullest expression in the cult of icons.”¹⁹⁸ Rabbinic engagement with the visual seems to have remained at the discursive, bodily level and did not extend to the material. It seems that the unmediated, face-to-face presence of the visible was key, with more attenuated representations occurring only in mental or verbal images. Furthermore, the sage icon was largely an intra-rabbinic phenomenon, unlike that of the Christian holy man. It did not pretend to, nor did it require, the spread of Christian *praesentia*.

The sage’s visible form as an icon of Torah and of the divine authenticated, extended, and promoted the entire project of Torah learning sponsored by the rabbinic collectivity.¹⁹⁹ To see the sage was to learn; to see the sage was to recollect and remember; and, ultimately, to see the sage was to become like him. In its combination of pedagogy and sanctity, the project was a mimetic one, and the rabbinic icon was the image that one strove to become. In the process, if all went well, each act of proper visual piety reinforced the existing rabbinic institution, strengthened the rabbinic project, and furthered the aims of *talmud torah*.

to use fire is indebted in some way to Zoroastrian notions of the sanctity of fire and light. However, fire imagery is used in Tannaitic and Palestinian sources and is, in itself, hardly an innovation on the part of Palestinian rabbis, or even on the part of late-antique polytheists, philosophers, or Christians.

¹⁹⁸ Frank, *Memory*, 181.

¹⁹⁹ This argument about the visual reproducibility of the sage is an important component of *b. Bava Metsi’a* 84a, both in terms of R. Yoḥanan’s effort to reproduce sons as “beautiful and learned as him” and also in terms of the divine-biblical-rabbinic genealogy running from God to Rav Kahana (par. *b. Bava Batra* 58a). R. Yoḥanan’s comparison to icons (*y. Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42b–c) in Palestinian sources, and the emphasis on his beauty in Babylonian sources can be seen as differing rabbinic attempts to portray an iconic “sage icon” in our terms. See Friedman, “Anthropomorphism revisited.”

Seeing texts

This brings us to our texts. Like pagan and Christian hagiographies, these rabbinic sources give us “textual personas” rather than rabbinic biographies; these laws, debates, and stories point us to those who edited, redacted, embellished, and authored them.²⁰⁰ Viewing our rabbinic sources at this intersection of storyteller and intended auditor allows us to understand the writing of sanctity into the sages as part of a larger project of rabbinic literature, which was designed to shape rabbinic subjects. These texts insist upon the figure of the holy sage, training the eye to seek and locate divine revelation in the sage’s body. To read these texts is to begin to participate in this vision of the sage icon and, in turn, to begin to accrue the benefits of Torah knowledge that make for wisdom and proper conduct. These textual icons summon rabbis into being.

²⁰⁰ Elm, “Introduction.” Elm notes the shift from the concept of the “holy man” initiated by Peter Brown to one in which the “holy man’s textuality” is keenly recognized. This then allows scholars to study the “complex interaction between the ‘textualized’ holy man and the individuals and communities that produced them, and were, in turn, produced by them” (p. 346).

Conclusion

[O]bserving the law rather than observing the world.

Martin Jay, *The Denigration of Vision*¹

Martin Jay uses the above expression to characterize the outlook of the Lithuanian Talmudic academies in which Emmanuel Levinas spent his youth. Jay links Levinas's "religious training" to his preoccupation with and antipathy toward the visual.² The sensibility Jay describes finds echoes in Tannaitic texts, such as *m. Avot* 3:9:

R. Jacob said, "If a man is walking on the road and studying and interrupts his study (*mishnato*) to say, 'How beautiful is this tree,' or, 'How beautiful is this furrow,' Scripture regards him as though he were liable for his life."

One could easily read this Tannaitic tradition as a binary statement opposing "observing the law" to "observing the world." The notion that one who strays from his study to spontaneously admire natural beauty is risking his life seems to demand a gaze that is impervious, if not oblivious, to the visual delights and pleasures of the world. But does this reflect a thoroughgoing rabbinic antipathy toward vision? In fact, the very next *mishnah* (*m. Avot* 3:10) complicates the apparently binary choice between vision and Torah:

R. Dosetay b. R. Yannay says in the name of R. Me'ir, "Whoever forgets a single thing from his learning (*mishnato*), Scripture regards him as if he were liable for his life, as it says: 'Only take great care and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the words which your eyes saw'" (Deuteronomy 4:9).

This *mishnah* presents another example of the negative consequences of neglecting one's study, but here, rather than implicating vision as a potential distraction from Torah learning, the *mishnah*, through the proof-text brought by R. Me'ir, turns vision into a vehicle for study. The adjacent

¹ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 551.

² Ibid.

admonitions, when taken together, present not so much an antipathy toward vision, but rather an engagement with it as a sense in service of Torah study.³ Throughout these pages, I have endeavored to show that the rabbis did not eschew vision, but rather sought to direct it toward beneficial visual objects (which, in some cases, even included worldly delights). Even prohibition was productive of a specifically rabbinic visuality, both by diverting the eye toward those things that are good to see and by constructing the forbidden visual object.

Visibilizing God

I have suggested that the common trope of an invisible Jewish God fits poorly with the deeply visual engagement with the divine throughout the rabbinic literary output. In Chapters 2 and 3, I argued that the real possibility of seeing God coupled with God's manifest absence in a post-temple world made for potent imaginings of how God was seen during temple pasts. These visual encounters were imagined in terms that resonated with aspects of contemporaneous Greco-Roman and Christian pilgrimage visuality. We also found that divine visuality was linked to life under non-Jewish rule. The significance of God's potential visibility (whether in homovisual or heterovisual terms) coupled with God's contemporary absence was enormously important to the production of a messianic, melancholic vision of divinity, and thus to basic notions in rabbinic piety and temporality. The nostalgia for divine vision, at least in the Bavli, was also used to undergird the location of the sacred in the figure of the sage. Just as the famous story in *b. Bava Metsi'a* 58b–59a declares that the Torah is “not in the heavens” (*lo bashamayim hi'*), creating space for rabbinic interpretation in the legal realm, so too God's visual inaccessibility in the contemporary world allowed the rabbis to imagine and inhabit visual sanctity in their own persons. This occurs in differing ways in Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic discourse as part of a rabbinic bid for authority.

Divinity, sexuality, and gender

Over and again we have seen how sacred visuality was conceptualized in opposition to forbidden visual eros. However, as we saw in both Chapters 3 and 4 this does not mean that the sacred was divorced from the erotic.

³ This recalls the injunction in *Didascalia* 2 (see Chapter 5, p. 198).

On the contrary, the sight of God was also sexualized in a variety of gender configurations. The gendering and sexualizing of divine visibility becomes a way to figure the effects (and affect) of imperial conquest (the proximal cause of the loss of the temple and direct visual contact with God). Vision and its gendering thus become a conduit through which the rabbis explored a poignant and complex set of issues facing Jews in a post-temple world, in a Roman-occupied Palestine, and in the Diaspora.

We have seen throughout these pages that the rabbis imagined variations in the visual dynamics of gender, beyond a standard paradigm in which males are viewers and females are visual objects.⁴ Visibility served as a locus for the rabbis to explore questions of gender and sexuality in visual encounters between God and humans, men and women, men and men, Jews and gentiles, and even men and animals. While the male gaze was the primary object of rabbinic scrutiny, this scrutiny promoted a vigilance and restraint on the part of the male eye.⁵ Restraint then was the route to the rabbinic repatterning of a male gaze, which, left to its own devices, looks phallically at women and other visual objects. However, particularly in the Bavli, the refusal to look potentially leads to feminization of the viewer, who thereby becomes an object of the gazes of women and other men. In this way, while restraint was valorized, masculinity was simultaneously troubled in its abdication of the male prerogative to look.⁶

If our sources take the rabbinic man as their subject, and indeed the subject, *par excellence*, the desiring gaze of women rarely appears. When it does, it comes in the form of transgressive eyes (adulterers, gentiles, and prostitutes), with few exceptions (such as the women who emerge from the *mique* and look at R. Yoḥanan's feminine form).⁷ Furthermore, notions of propriety and gender, shared with Romans, and probably upper-class Persians, produced women as quintessential visual objects that were simultaneously idealized in their lack of visibility. Just as the male rabbinic gaze was naturalized as phallic but normalized as restrained, so too woman was naturalized as visual object but normalized as non-visible, even "unseen

⁴ Tannaitic sources, e.g. *m. Sotah*, offer a more binary view of gender and vision, though there are exceptions, such as *Sifre Deuteronomy* 36 (ed. Finkelstein, 68; paralleled in *t. Berakhot* 6:25; *y. Berakhot* 9:5, 14d; *b. Menahot* 43b). Cf. Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 213, who notes how the Bavli upsets the objectification and erasure of women in the Mishnah. She argues that while there may be a "dominant perspective of the text" in the Bavli, this does not make for a "homogeneously gendered discourse."

⁵ On rabbinic masculinity and restraint see Satlow, "Try to be a man"; Satlow, "Rabbinic views"; Levinson, "Bodies and bo(a)rders."

⁶ Schroeder, "Queer eye." ⁷ *B. Bava Metsi* 'a 84a.

and unseeing.”⁸ For both masculinity and femininity, rabbinic vision’s making involves its unmaking.

Visual abstinence and the imperial gaze

The rabbinic combination of gendered gazing and visual restraint found company with other late-antique visualities. Early Christian writings give us some insight onto another minority culture’s construction of vision and visibility under an empire characterized as hostile, even violent, and in a “gentile” world understood as dangerous, immoral, and spectacularly idolatrous. These sources, together with later monastic and hagiographical sources, express similar juxtapositions of desire, eros, virtue, gaze, and abstinence. We can think about how patterns of convergence, overlap, and difference between these two religious formations emerged from a shared uneasy relation to imperial authority, at least until the fourth century before Rome became Christian.⁹ Like others who experienced themselves in complicated ways in relation to imperial power, the rabbis of Palestine and Babylonia narrated their own positions and histories through the collaborating circuits of vision and gender.¹⁰

Scholars have already taught us to attend to ocular dynamics in thinking through gender vis-à-vis Roman and Christian empire.¹¹ They have also opened up early Christian and rabbinic sources as “hidden transcripts,” in which Christians and rabbis resisted or negotiated imperialism.¹² We can understand rabbinic considerations of divine visibility, Jewish visual exploitation, and idolatry, as negotiations with the colonial gaze. I have argued that the sense of vision was not only used to figure imperialism but also shaped to resist it. In other words, rabbis both used vision to narrate hierarchical formulae of a dominant, imperial viewer, with Jews as submissive visual objects, and also exploited sight’s subversive potential.

⁸ At the same time, there is evidence in the Bavli of rabbinic ambivalence about absolute female resistance to the gaze.

⁹ See, e.g., Burrus, “Reading Agnes,” 26–27.

¹⁰ To work such as Baker, *Rebuilding the House*; Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*; Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*; Levinson, “Tragedy of romance”; Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*; Ishay Rozen Zvi, “Bilah the temptress”; Satlow, *Jewish Marriage*; and Schremer, *Male and Female*, on gender and sexuality in late-antique Jewish culture, we add the dimension of the cultivation of rabbinic gender and sexuality through the direction of the (male) eye.

¹¹ See Burrus, *Saving Shame*; Burrus, “Reading Agnes”; Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*; Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire*; Jacobs, *Remains*; Goldhill, “Erotic eye.”

¹² Berkowitz, *Execution and Invention*; Boyarin, *Dying for God*; Fine, *Art and Judaism*; Schwartz, *Mediterranean Society*?

These sources thus offer what we might call a “hidden lens” onto the visicitudes of power and powerlessness in the Roman and Persian empires.¹³

Pilgrimage fantasies set in the temple past, along with the writing of contemporary pilgrimage itineraries, also express a rabbinic visuality refracted through a “hidden lens.”¹⁴ Rabbis crafted lenses onto the past, the landscape, and onto social and material environments, which overlaid dominant visualities sponsored by the Roman and Christian empire. Similarly, the fashioning of a sagely physiognomics, with which rabbis were to see themselves and others (including non-rabbis, gentiles, women, those with different kinds of bodies), was a means of self-determination. How one looked – how one saw or did not, how one was seen, and how one was seen to see – was a means of marking oneself and others. Just as many late ancients understood vision as a form of contact in which viewer and visual object affected one another, so too, in a social sense, did objects and subjects of vision reflect back on, or mutually constitute, each other. The sense of vision was a useful one in many respects. The rabbis narrated vision not only to figure their anxieties about this project (in stories of how they are misrecognized by non-rabbis or gentiles) but also to restore a sense of sociopolitical visibility, by setting themselves apart.

The product of (not) looking

We have argued in this book that vision in late antiquity was, in itself, a promiscuous sense; its hapticity, its slipperiness, its ability to collaborate with and stimulate the heart, the sense of touch, the appetites and desires made it especially dangerous and in need of mastery and discipline. Rabbis, physicians, magicians, and church fathers sought to provide directions for the eye. In rabbinic sources, such direction was often couched in the language of prohibition, with the threat of transgression carrying negative consequences in tow. These consequences were often posed as much as a matter of science or nature, as of divine wrath. The former, an example of which was seen in visual eugenics and gynecology, was indebted to the tactility of the gaze.

¹³ It is easier to imagine how this “hidden lens” operates in the context of Roman-Christian Palestine than in the Persian-Zoroastrian Babylonia. Nonetheless, even with the relative lack of Persian evidence, Persian imperial inscriptions and art, and Zoroastrian and Christian-Mesopotamian sources suggest that state and religious imperialism and its discontents were a significant aspect of the lives of Persians, and the minorities under their rule.

¹⁴ Neis, “Pilgrimage Itineraries.”

A crucial function of prohibition, aside from constituting rabbinic gender, was its (related) productive and generative role in picturing and stimulating (illicit) desire.¹⁵ Naming the types of sights, or forbidden *'ervah*, depicts the very desires rabbinic texts purport to outlaw. At the same time, rabbinic narrative itself exposes the irony of prohibition's productive power, along with the contradictions of the rabbinic normative and natural paradigms of gender. Whether through gaze aversion, fantasy about the past, or projection and scrutiny in the present, the eye was exploited, ultimately, in order to produce a rabbinic subject.

Rabbinic optics: between Palestine and Babylonia

The primary goal of this book has been to demonstrate the importance of the eye in crucial aspects of life, as depicted in rabbinic sources, including the divine, sexuality, gender, physiognomics, and scholasticism. We would search in vain for a rabbinic optics in the style of Euclid's *Optics*, or for a rabbinic ophthalmology in the manner of Galen's expositions, but, as we have seen, basic principles about the eye's operations are at play in rabbinic sources. These include the notion that vision is bound up with touch, which accounts for the concern that both the Palestinian and the Babylonian sources evince about the evil eye and the illicitly lustful gaze. The physicalist understanding of the gaze means that it was seen not only as "phallomorphic" but also as devouring or consuming.¹⁶

This tactile quality of the gaze is what made vision potentially a "two-way street."¹⁷ In other words, because the viewer is closely linked to the object of sight, one might all too easily slip from being a seeing subject to being a seeing, or seen, object. In philosophical terms, vision could effect a blurring of subject/object and viewer/viewed distinctions. Thus, while a man may have "set his eyes" on a woman, an extramissive expression that we might expect to have consequences for the female visual object, he could end up becoming biliously and mortally heart-sick as a consequence.¹⁸

¹⁵ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 158–59; Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, 59, 87; Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 63; Butler, *Excitable Speech*, 117.

¹⁶ On the "phallomorphic gaze" and the visual ingestion of the *shekhinah*, see Wolfson, *Speculum*, 104. On Roman ideas of the devouring gaze see Bartsch, *Mirror of the Self*, 150–51.

¹⁷ Miles, "Vision," 128.

¹⁸ *Y. 'Avodah Zarah* 2:2, 40d (paralleled in *y. Shabbat* 14:4, 14d; *b. Sanhedrin* 75a).

On the other hand, withholding the gaze, as we have seen, could just as much provoke the gaze of the other as secure the integrity of the subject. Late-antique vision was hardly the disembodied, rational, controlling, and objective Cartesian gaze. The Cartesian gaze distinguished subject and objects by “rendering the first transcendental and the second inert.”¹⁹ Even the unseen but all-seeing eye of the late-antique Jewish God did not quite accomplish this relation vis-à-vis the rabbinic subject, who constantly pined to return God’s gaze and who internalized the divine panoptic gaze to monitor his own conduct.²⁰ In reverse, this entails the imbrication of divinity and humanity. While homovisuality, a seeing that is mirroring, and heterovisuality, a seeing that is othering, describe two paradigmatic modes of viewing, the tactile nature of late-antique seeing brought subject and object (or subject and subject) together in a visuality that was always potentially chiasmic.

Post-Tannaitic writings do occasionally consider the operations of the eye in what can be considered a more scientific or medical fashion. Palestinian sources, and even more so Babylonian ones (which seem to inherit Mesopotamian scientific traditions), expend some energy on discussing a variety of eye-diseases, treatments, and preventions and, in so doing, occasionally mention certain ideas about the physiology of the eye and the mechanics of vision.²¹ This includes ideas about optics, medicine, and animal vision.²² What is understood today as properly medical was not isolated in late antiquity from the broader realms of religion and culture. Thus, the rabbis believed that poor eyesight was also caused by things like gazing at the face of an evil person (*b. Megillah* 28a); gazing at the rainbow (*b. Hagigah* 16a); and at the night-demon Shavriiri (*b. ‘Avodah Zarah* 12b). While they warned that taking rapid steps diminishes the eyesight

¹⁹ Foster (ed.), *Vision and Visuality*, x. ²⁰ Clark, “Sex, shame, and rhetoric.”

²¹ Throughout the book I have sought to identify the sources (often composite) of the texts discussed. See my remarks on pp. 14–15, nn. 34, 36. Significant input (whether in placement, reworking, or substance) by editors include: *b. Hagigah* 2a, 3a–b, 4a, 4b, 5a–b; *b. Gittin* 58a; *b. Bava Metsi’ia* 84a; *b. ‘Eruvin* 13b; *b. Qiddushin* 33a–b (some reuse and juxtaposition of sources; reworking and addition). For further remarks on editorial intervention see pp. 61; 73; 75; 141; 165; 182–83; 169, n. 131; 206; 230; 248, n. 187; 249.

²² E.g. *b. ‘Avodah Zarah* 28b; *Leviticus Rabbah* 31:8 (ed. Margalio, ii:727–28); *b. Shabbat* 77b, 108b–109a; *b. Ketubot* 60b; *b. ‘Avodah Zarah* 29a; *b. Niddah* 23a; Sifra Emor 2 (ed. Weiss, 95a); *b. Gittin* 56a; *b. ‘Avodah Zarah* 51a; *b. Bekhorot* 38b. On the extent to which these teachings (particularly those in the Bavli) reflect Greco-Roman and Babylonian medical traditions respectively. See Geller, “Akkadian healing therapies”; Rosner, *Medicine in the Bible*, 13.

(*me'or 'enav*), they also recommended *qiddush* as a restorative (*b. Berakhot* 43b; *b. Shabbat* 113b; *b. Ta'anit* 10b).²³

Our study of visuality across Palestinian and Babylonian sources has shone a light onto some of the shared and divergent ways of seeing in these two rabbinic centers. Some of the differences between them may be explained in terms of cultural region. This is, in part, how we understood the diverging depictions of divine-pilgrimage visuality. We also noted variations in sagely visibility that give us some insight into the different social and institutional structures and values in these rabbinic communities. It is also no surprise, given the shared cultural traditions across the late-antique Near East and the sharing of rabbinic heritages and teachings across the two centers, that the areas of overlap in visualities are considerable.

The dynamic conditions in which the Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis produced their literary corpora, and the patterns of overlap and divergence therein, cannot be reduced to mono-causal explanations of origin, influence, dependence, and the like. We are better served by multi-causal, multi-pronged, and complex explanations, on a case-by-case basis; and this is the approach I have taken here. Here is an example of why: The idea that the eye has a major role in inflaming and transmitting desire is found in equal measure in pre-rabbinic, that is ancient Babylonian *and* ancient Greek epic, and in biblical sources too. So too, visual eugenics drive ancient Babylonian incantations as much as they motivate biblical conceptions of animal husbandry, and Greco-Roman gynecology. In other words, rabbis in Palestine and Babylonia shared a *mélange* of ancient biblical, Babylonian, Greek, and Roman traditions – albeit in different emphasis and kind, and they also shared ideas through contemporary travel and transmission among themselves and via broader cultural conduits. The exchange of ideas, people, trade, technology, and violence that made for the “shared philosophical *koiné*” across the Roman and Persian empires was not an innovation of late antiquity.²⁴ Rabbinic literature and

²³ Many of these religio-medical musings on the eye are in the Bavli and find their way, albeit along with Hippocratic and other ideas, into the *Sefer Harefu'ot* of Asaf the Physician.

²⁴ On a case-by-case basis, we have found examples of ideas regarding vision that may point to local divergences. For example, the ideas that there are invisible demons in the environment that may be seen with a special device, and of *hezeq re'iyah*, a legal tort of visual damage, are unique to the Bavli. Perhaps the former relates to the Zoroastrian concepts of *gētīg* and *mênôg*. As for the latter, there is no equivalent articulation of *hezeq re'iyah* in Palestinian sources; neither am I aware of anything quite like it in Roman legal sources. As has been noted by scholars of Roman law and of comparative architecture, the main Roman concern with views and urban planning related to preserving access to beautiful vistas, in contrast to the (eventual) Islamic concern to preserve visual privacy. We can speculate that the Babylonian-rabbinic and early Islamic preoccupation with visual damage, modesty, and privacy is related to similar Zoroastrian-Persian concerns. See Lieberman,

its authors bear the marks of multiple cultural traditions, pre-existing and contemporaneous.

The rabbinic question

To return here to the question posed at the beginning of this book: Can we speak of a rabbinic-Jewish sensibility or way of seeing? We can certainly conclude that there is no cause for ethnic triumphalism implied by claims of a historically unique “Jewish eye.”²⁵ Rabbinic eyes were eyes clearly embedded in the late-antique visual world. However, while many aspects of rabbinic visuality were very much of their time, they were also unmistakably set in a web of ideas, a patchwork of pieties, and a rubric of ritual that were Jewish and distinctively rabbinic. Vision was thought in the language of Israel, the sacred, the temple, *ervah*, idolatry, and narratives about biblical characters and rabbinic sages. Visuality was inflected in rabbinic ways and was made useful for the rabbinic project.

Perhaps questions about rabbinic visual distinctiveness must be asked, but their usefulness is limited. For one thing, they reify what counts as “rabbinic” (and often also what counts as non-rabbinic) and potentially flatten the diversity and range of rabbinic (and non-rabbinic) visuality, which itself was not fully coherent, unified, or static. Once we acknowledge this, however, we can attend to how rabbinically inflected visuality was simultaneously embedded in Jewish, and other “memes,” as well as in claimed and unclaimed traditions. What I hope to have shown along the various visual arena we have surveyed, is the significance of claims of difference and distinctiveness themselves. Paradoxically, in their explicit, veiled, implicit, and even unconscious, claims or enactments of a singular rabbinic-Jewish visuality, the rabbis were often relying on common visual theories. Furthermore, the very claim of singularity was itself not all that unusual, as we have seen when we have turned to Christian and Zoroastrian sources. It is in this sense that the rabbis were at their most unsingular while claiming to be uniquely rabbinic: The claim of an especial acuity of vision was a way to mark oneself in a completely unremarkable fashion.

Rabbinic visuality in its variety did not lie stagnant in the hands (or eyes) of those who claimed the legacy of the rabbis of the Mishnah, Midrash, and Talmud. In the later halakhic, midrashic, *piyyut* and *Hekhalot* literature penned from the fifth century and afterwards, vision continued to be

“A few words”; Hakim, “Julian of Ascalon”; Hakim, “Mediterranean urban and building codes”; Saliou, “Byzantine house.”

²⁵ Shneer, *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes*, 4.

reshaped and rethought, and would remain a vital mode through which to figure and make law, desire, affect, and the sacred.²⁶

²⁶ Just some examples will have to suffice: for laws about women and cosmetics, see Newman, *Ma'asim of the People of the Land of Israel*, 96–97; for the desire for the rebuilding of the temple and for the appearance of the *shekhinah* (*shekhinatekha tekhaze lehaqem*), see Zulay, “New poems,” 35; for ocular ritual pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the temple ruins and a prayer that invokes God’s and Israel’s vision, see Margalio, *Laws of the Land of Israel*, 139–40; for God and Israel’s mutual gaze during prayer, see *Hekhalot Rabbati* 152–69, Schäfer (ed.), *Synopse*; for a variety of visual themes, see Yannai’s *qedushta* for Deuteronomy 6:4 in Rabinovitz, *Liturgical Poems*, vol. II, 138–47 (trans. Lieber, “Themes and variations,” 190–95).

Bibliography

- Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, trans. John J. Winkler, in B. P. Reardon (ed.), *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 170–285
- Adams, Jr., Reginald B., Nalini Ambady, Ken Nakayama, and Shinsuke Shimojo (eds.), *The Science of Social Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)
- Alcock, Susan, *Graecia Capta: The Landscapes of Roman Greece* (Cambridge University Press, 1993)
- Alexander, Philip S., “The Talmudic concept of conjuring (*ʿAhizat ʿEinayim*) and the problem of the definition of magic (*Kishuf*),” in R. Elier and P. Schäfer (eds.), *Creation and Recreation in Jewish Thought: Festschrift in Honour of Joseph Dan on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 7–26
- Alon, Gedaliahu, *Studies in Jewish History in the Time of the Second Temple, the Mishnah, and the Talmud* (Hebrew), 2 vols. (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameʿuhad, 1957–1958)
- Jews, Judaism and the Classical World: Studies in Jewish History in the Time of the Second Temple and Talmud*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1977)
- Anderson, Gary, “The expression of joy as a halakhic problem in rabbinic sources,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 80 (1990), 221–52
- “Towards a theology of the Tabernacle and its furniture,” in Ruth A. Clements and Daniel R. Schwartz (eds.), *Text, Thought, and Practice in Qumran and Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 161–94
- Ando, Clifford, “Decline, fall and transformation,” *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 1/1 (2008), 31–60
- Apophthegmata Patrum*, trans. Benedicta Ward, *Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (London: Mowbrays, 1975)
- Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag: *The Iranian “Divina Comedia,”* ed. and trans. Fereyduun Vahman (London and Malmo: Curzon, 1986)
- Arnheim, Rudolph, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974)
- Arnobius of Sicca, *The Case Against the Pagans*, trans. George E. McCracken, 2 vols. (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1949)

- Asmussen, J. P., "Acts of Ādur-Hormizd and of Anāhīd," in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982–), vol. 1, fasc. 4, 430
- Athanasius, *On the Incarnation: The Treatise De incarnatione Verbi Dei*, trans. Penelope Lawson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996)
- Atthanassiadi, Polymnia, *Julian: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Routledge, 1981)
- Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III: The Homilies*, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1992)
- Aumont, Jacques, "The point of view," trans. Arthur Denner, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 11/2 (1989), 1–22
- Auslander, Leora, "'Jewish taste'? Jews, and the aesthetics of everyday life in Paris and Berlin, 1933–1942," in Rudy Koshar (ed.), *Histories of Leisure* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2002), 299–331
- "Beyond words," *American Historical Review*, 110/4 (2005), 1015–45
- "The boundaries of Jewishness, or when is a cultural practice Jewish?" *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 8/1 (2009), 47–64
- Baert, Barbara, "More than an image, Agnes of Rome: virginity and visual memory," in Johan Leemans (ed.), *More Than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2005), 139–68
- Bahrani, Zainab, *Women of Babylon: Gender and Representation in Mesopotamia* (London: Routledge, 2001)
- Bailey, Harold Walter, *Zoroastrian Problems of the Ninth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1943)
- Baker, Cynthia M., *Rebuilding the House of Israel: Architectures of Gender in Jewish Antiquity* (Stanford University Press, 2002)
- Bal, Mieke, "Narration and focalization," in David Jopling (ed.), *On Story-Telling: Essays in Narratology* (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 1991), 75–108
- Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (University of Toronto Press, 1997)
- Looking In: The Art of Viewing* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 2001)
- Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (University of Toronto Press, 2002)
- Bal, Mieke and Jane E. Lewin, "The narrating and the focalizing: a theory of the agents in narrative," *Style*, 17/2 (1983), 234–69
- Bar Asher Siegal, Michal, "Literary analogies in rabbinic and Christian monastic sources," PhD dissertation, Yale University (2010)
- "The making of a monk-rabbi: the background for the creation of the stories of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai in the cave" (Hebrew), *Zion*, 76/3 (2011), 279–304
- Bar Ilan, Meir, "The hand of God: a chapter in rabbinic anthropomorphism," in G. Sed-Rajna (ed.), *Rashi 1040–1990: Hommage a Ephraïm E. Urbach, congrès européen des études juives* (Paris: Les éditions du CERF, 1993), 321–35
- Bar Sela, Ariela and Hebbel E. Hoff, "Asaf on anatomy and physiology," *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 20/4 (October 1965), 358–89

- Barag, Dan, "The table of the showbread and the facade of the Temple on coins of the Bar-Kokhba revolt," in Hillel Geva (ed.), *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 272–76
- Baraita de-Melekheth ha-Mishkan, ed. and trans. Robert Kirschner (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1992)
- Barker, Jennifer, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009)
- Barker, Martin and Julian Petley (eds.), *Ill Effects: The Media/Violence Debate* (London: Routledge, 2001)
- Barnes, T. D., "Christians and the theater," in William J. Slater (ed.), *Roman Theater and Society: E. Togo Salmon Papers I* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 161–80
- Baron, Salo, "Problems of Jewish identity," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 46–47 (1979–1980), 33–67
- Barthes, Roland, *The Pleasure of Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975)
- Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981)
- Bartman, Elizabeth, "Eros's flame: images of sexy boys in Roman ideal sculpture," in Elaine K. Gazda (ed.), *The Ancient Art of Emulation: Studies in Artistic Originality and Tradition from the Present to Classical Antiquity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002)
- Barton, Carlin, "Being in the eyes: shame and sight in ancient Rome," in David Fredrick (ed.), *Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 216–36
- Barton, Tamsyn S., *Power and Knowledge: Astrology, Physiognomics, and Medicine under the Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994)
- Bartsch, Shadi, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-Knowledge and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire* (University of Chicago Press, 2006)
- Bassi, Karen, "Things of the past: objects and time in Greek narrative," *Arethusa*, 38/1 (Winter 2005), 1–32
- Baumgarten, Albert, "Rabbi Judah I and his opponents," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 12 (1981), 135–72
- "Metaphors of memory," in Ronen Reichman (ed.), *"Der Odem des Menschen ist eine Leuchte des Herrn": Aharon Agus zum Gedenken* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2006), 77–89
- Bausani, Alessandro, *Religion in Iran: From Zoroaster to Baha'ullah*, trans. J. M. Marchesi (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2000)
- Baxandall, Michael, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972)
- Beard, Mary, John A. North and Simon R. F. Price (eds.), *Religions of Rome: A History*, 2 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1998)
- Becker, Adam H., *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisbis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006)

- "The comparative study of 'scholasticism' in late antique Mesopotamia: rabbis and East Syrians," *AJS Review*, 34 (2010), 91–113
- Bedjan, Paul (ed.), *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, 7 vols. (Paris: Otto Harrassowitz, 1890–1897)
- Behr, John, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford University Press, 2000)
- Belayche, Nicole, *Iudaea-Palaestina: The Pagan Cults in Roman Palestine (Second to Fourth Century)* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001)
- Belting, Hans, *Likeness and Presence* (University of Chicago Press, 1994)
- Beretta, Marco, "From eye to eye-glass," in Marco Beretta (ed.), *When Glass Matters: Studies in the History of Science and Art from Graeco-Roman Antiquity to Early Modern Era* (Florence: Olschki, 2004), 258–67
- Berger, John, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1972)
- Berkowitz, Beth A., *Execution and Invention: Death Penalty Discourse in Early Rabbinic and Christian Cultures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)
- "The limits of 'their laws': ancient rabbinic controversies about Jewishness (and non-Jewishness)," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 99/1 (2009), 121–57
- Biale, David, *Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought* (Princeton University Press, 2011)
- Bidmead, Julie, *The Akîtu Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2002)
- Birnbaum, Ellen, *The Place of Judaism in Philo's Thought: Israel, Jews and Proselytes* (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1996)
- Bland, Kalman, *The Artless Jew: Medieval and Modern Affirmations and Denials of the Visual* (Princeton University Press, 2000)
- Blidstein, Gerald J., "R. Yohanan, idolatry, and public privilege," *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, 5 (1974), 154–61
- Blumenthal, H. J., "Plotinus' adaptation of Aristotle's psychology: sensation, imagination and memory," in R. Baine Harris (ed.), *The Significance of Neoplatonism* (Norfolk, Va.: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1976), 41–58
- Blumenthal, H. J. and R. A. Markus (eds.), *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in Honour of A. H. Armstrong* (London: Variorum, 1981)
- Bohak, Gideon, *Joseph and Asenath and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis*, SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature Series (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1996)
- Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 2008)
- Bokser, Baruch M., "An annotated bibliographical guide to the study of the Palestinian Talmud," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II*, 19/2 (1979), 139–256 (repr. as "Annotated guide to the study of the Palestinian Talmud," in Jacob Neusner [ed.], *The Study of Ancient Judaism*, vol. 11: *The Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds* [Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1981], 1–119)
- "Wonder-working and the rabbinic tradition: the case of Hanina ben Dosa," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period*, 16 (1985), 42–92

- Bonner, Campbell, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950)
- Boon, Armand, *Pachomiana Latina: Règle et épîtres de S. Pachôme, épître de S. Théodore, et <<liber>> de S. Orsiesius, texte latin de S. Jérôme* (Louvain: Bureaux de la revue, 1932)
- Bottéro, Jean, "Symptômes, signes, écritures en Mésopotamie ancienne," in Jean-Pierre Vernant (ed.), *Divination et rationalité* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974), 70–197
- Boustán, Ra'anan S., "Eunuchs and gender transformation: Philo's exegesis of the Joseph narrative," in Shaun Tougher (ed.), *Eunuchs in Antiquity and Beyond* (London: Duckworth, 2002), 103–21
- "Rabbi Ishmael's miraculous conception: Jewish redemption history in anti-Christian polemic," in Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (eds.), *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 307–44
- "The study of Heikhalot literature: between mystical experience and textual artifact," *Currents in Biblical Research*, 6/1 (2007), 130–60
- "The spoils of the Jerusalem Temple at Rome and Constantinople: Jewish counter-geography in a Christianizing empire," in Gregg Gardner and Kevin L. Osterloh (eds.), *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 327–72
- "Rabbinization and the making of early Jewish mysticism," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 101/4 (2011), 482–501
- Bowersock, G. W., "The Syriac life of Rabbula and Syrian Hellenism," in Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 255–72
- Boyarín, Daniel, "The eye in the Torah: ocular desire in midrashic hermeneutic," *Critical Inquiry*, 16 (1990), 532–50
- "'This we know to be carnal Israel': circumcision and the erotic life of God and Israel," *Critical Inquiry*, 18/3 (1993), 474–505
- Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)
- Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford University Press, 1999)
- "Why is Rabbi Yohanan a woman? or, a queer marriage gone bad: 'Platonic love' in the Talmud," in Mark D. Jordan (ed.), *Authorizing Marriage?: Canon, Tradition, and Critique in the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions* (Princeton University Press, 2006), 52–67
- "Hellenism in Jewish Babylonia," in Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 336–63
- Socrates and the Fat Rabbis* (University of Chicago Press, 2009)
- Boyce, Mary, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, 3 vols. (Leiden, Brill: 1975)
- "Ahura Mazdā," in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982–), vol. 1, fasc. 7, 684–87

- “Ātaš,” in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982–), vol. III, fasc. 1, 1–5
- “Pādyāb’ and ‘nērang’: two Pahlavi terms further considered,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 54/2 (1991), 281–91
- Brakke, David, “The problematization of nocturnal emissions in early Christian Syria, Egypt, and Gaul,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 3/4 (1995), 419–60
- Branham, Joan, “Penetrating the sacred: breaches and barriers in the Jerusalem temple,” in Sharon E. J. Gerstel (ed.), *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2006), 7–26
- Bregman, Marc, “Seeing with the sages: midrash as visualization in the legends of the Aqedah,” in Marc Lee Raphael (ed.), *Agendas for the Study of Midrash in the Twenty-First Century* (Williamsburg, Va.: Department of Religion, College of William and Mary, 1999), 84–100
- “Aqedah: midrash as visualization,” *Journal of Textual Reasoning*, 2/1 (2003) (<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/tr/volume2/bregman.html>)
- Brenner, Athalya, *The Intercourse of Knowledge: On Gendering Desire and “Sexuality” in the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1997)
- Brock, Sebastian P. and Susan Ashbrook Harvey (trans.), *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987)
- Brodsky, David, *A Bride Without a Blessing: A Study in the Redaction and Content of Massekhet Kallah and Its Gemara* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006)
- Brody, Robert, “The anonymous Talmud and the words of the Amoraim” (Hebrew), in Baruch Schwartz, Avraham Melamed and Aharon Shemesh (eds.), *Iggud: Selected Essays in Jewish Studies*, vol. 1: *The Bible and Its World, Rabbinic Literature, and Jewish Philosophy* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 2008), 213–27
- Brown, Francis, Samuel R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford University Press, 1907)
- Brown, Miranda and Uffe Bergeton, “‘Seeing’ like a sage: three perspectives on perception and identity,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 35/3 (2008), 641–42
- Brown, Peter L., “The rise and function of the holy man in late antiquity,” *Journal of Roman Studies*, 61 (1971), 80–101
- The Philosopher and Society in Late Antiquity: Protocol of the Thirty-Fourth Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture* (Berkeley, Calif.: The Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1980)
- The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (University of Chicago Press, 1981)
- “The saint as exemplar in late antiquity,” *Representations*, 1/2 (1983), 1–25
- The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988)
- Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989)

- "Holy men," in Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (eds.), *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. XIII: *The Late Empire, A.D. 337–425* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 781–810
- "Enjoying the saints in late antiquity," *Early Medieval Europe*, 9 (2000), 1–24
- Bruhm, Steven, *Reflecting Narcissus: A Queer Aesthetic* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001)
- Bryson, Norman, "Semiology and visual interpretation," in Norman Bryson, Michael A. Holly, and Keith Moxey (eds.), *Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 61–73
- Budge, E. A. Wallis, *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1913; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1977)
- Buell, Denise Kimber, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005)
- Bullough, Vern L., "Attitudes towards deviant sex in ancient Mesopotamia," *Journal of Sex Research*, 7/3 (1971), 184–203
- Burrows, Mark S., "On the visibility of God in the holy man: a reconsideration of the role of the Apa in the Pachomian *Vitae*," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 41 (1987), 11–33
- Burrus, Virginia, "Reading Agnes: the rhetoric of gender in Ambrose and Prudentius," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 3 (1995), 25–46
- The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)
- "Mapping as metamorphosis: initial reflections on gender and ancient religious discourses," in Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (eds.), *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1–10
- Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008)
- Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990)
- Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997)
- The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford University Press, 1997)
- Bynum, Caroline, "The female body and religious practice in the later Middle Ages," in Michel Fehrer, Ramona Raddaff, and Nadia Tazi (eds.), *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* (New York: Zone Books, 1989), vol. 1, 160–219
- Cairns, Douglas (ed.), *Body Language in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2005)
- Calabi, Francesca, *God's Acting, Man's Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 2008)
- Cameron, Averil, "The language of images: the rise of icons and Christian representation," *Studies in Church History*, 28 (1992), 1–42
- "Byzantines and Jews: some recent work on early Byzantium," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 20 (1996), 249–74
- "Form and meaning: the *Vita Constantini* and the *Vita Antonii*," in Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 72–88

- Campbell, Emma, "Sacrificial spectacle and interpassive vision in the Anglo-Norman *Life of Saint Faith*," in Emma Campbell and Robert Mills (eds.), *Troubled Vision: Gender, Sexuality and Sight in Medieval Text and Image* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 97–115
- Campbell, Emma and Robert Mills (eds.), *Troubled Vision: Gender, Sexuality, and Sight in Medieval Text and Image* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)
- Canepa, Matthew P., *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Competition and Exchange in the Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sassanian Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009)
- "Theorizing cross-cultural interaction among ancient and early medieval visual cultures," *Ars Orientalis*, 38 (2010), 7–29
- Caseau, Béatrice, "Sacred landscape," in G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (eds.), *Interpreting Late Antiquity: Essays on the Postclassical World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001)
- Castelli, Elizabeth, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004)
- Caviness, Madeline H., *Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages: Sight, Spectacle, and Scopic Economy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001)
- Chavel, Simeon, "The face of God and the etiquette of eye-contact: visitation, pilgrimage, and prophetic vision in ancient Israelite and early Jewish imagination," *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, 19/1 (2012), 1–55
- Cheriness, Harold F., "Galen and Posidonius' theory of vision," *The American Journal of Philology*, 54/2 (1933), 154–61
- Cixous, Hélène, "Writing blind: conversations with the donkey," in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (London: Routledge, 1998), 139–52
- Clagett, Marshall, *Greek Science in Antiquity* (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1955)
- Clark, Elizabeth A., "Sex, shame, and rhetoric: en-gendering early Christian ethics," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 59 (1991), 221–45.
- Clark, Gillian, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Roman Life-Styles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)
- Clarke, John R., *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans: Visual Representation and Non-Elite Viewers in Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003)
- Clay, Albert T. and Clarence E. Keiser, *Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan*, 4 vols. (New York: private printing, 1912–1923)
- Clement of Alexandria, *Clement of Alexandria: Christ the Educator*, trans. Simon Wood (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1954)
- The Exhortation to the Greeks, the Rich Man's Salvation, and the Frangment of an Address Entitled, to the Newly Baptized*, trans. G. W. Butterworth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1919)
- Cobb, L. Stephanie, *Dying to be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008)
- Cocking, J. M., *Imagination: A Study in the History of Ideas* (London: Routledge, 1991)
- Cohen, Barak S., "'In Nehardea where there are no heretics': the purported Jewish response to Christianity in Nehardea (a re-examination of the talmudic

- evidence),” in Dan Jaffé (ed.), *Studies in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity: Text and Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 29–44
- Cohen, Beth, “Divesting the female breast of clothes in classical sculpture,” in A. O. Koloski-Ostrow and C. Lyons (eds.), *Naked Truths: Women, Sexuality, and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 1997), 66–92
- Cohen, Jeremy, “The Jews as killers of Christ in the Latin tradition, from Augustine to the Friars,” *Traditio*, 39 (1983), 1–27
- Cohen, Shaye J. D., “Patriarchs and scholars,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 48 (1981), 57–85
- “The destruction, from scripture to midrash,” *Prooftexts*, 2/1 (1982), 18–39
- “Alexander the Great and Jaddus the high priest according to Josephus,” *AJS Review*, 7–8 (1982–1983), 41–68
- From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1987)
- “The place of the rabbis in second century Jewish society,” in Lee I. Levine (ed.), *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 157–73
- “The conversion of Antoninus,” in Peter Schäfer and Catherine Hezser (eds.), *The Palestinian Talmud and Graeco-Roman Culture*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), vol. 1, 47–65
- The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)
- “Purity, piety, and polemic: medieval rabbinic denunciations of ‘incorrect’ purification practices,” in Rahel R. Wasserfall (ed.), *Women and Water: Menstruation in Jewish Life and Law* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1999), 82–100
- (ed.), *The Synoptic Problem in Rabbinic Literature* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000)
- Cook, James W., “Seeing the visual in U.S. history,” *Journal of American History*, 95 (2008), 432–41
- Cooper, Kate, “Closely watched households: visibility, exposure and private power in the Roman domus,” *Past & Present*, 197/1 (2007), 3–33
- Corbeill, Anthony, *Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome* (Princeton University Press, 2004)
- Corbett, Peter Edgar, “Greek temples and Greek worshippers: the literary and archaeological evidence,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 17 (1970), 149–58
- Corbin, Alain, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988)
- Village Bells* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998)
- Cotelier, Jean-Baptiste, *Ecclesiae Graecae Monumenta*, 3 vols. (Luteciae Parisiorum: Apud Franciscum Muguet, 1677–1692)
- Cowie, Elizabeth, “Fantasia,” *mlf*, 9 (1984), 70–105
- Crary, Jonathan, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990)

- Dadestan i Denig, Part 1: Transcription, Translation and Commentary*, ed. and trans. Mahmoud Jaafari-Dehaghi. Les Cahiers de Studia Iranica, 20 (Paris: Association pour l'avancement d'études iraniennes, 1998)
- Dahood, Mitchell, *Psalms 1:1–50*, Anchor Bible Series, vol. 16 (New York: Doubleday, 1964)
- D'Angelo, Mary Rose, "Veils, virgins, and the tongues of men and angels," in Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger (eds.), *Off with Her Head!* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 131–64
- Darmester, James (ed.), *Avesta Khorda Avesta: Book of Common Prayer* (repr. Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger Publishing, 2004)
- Darrigol, Oliver, *A History of Optics: From Greek Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2012)
- Daryaei, Touraj, "Sight, semen and the brain: ancient Persian notions of physiology in Old and Middle Iranian texts," *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 30/1–2 (2002), 103–28
- "Kingship in early Sasanian Iran," in Veshta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart (eds.), *The Idea of Iran*, vol. III: *The Sasanian Era* (London: I. B. Tauris in association with the London Middle East Institute at SOAS and the British Museum, 2008), 60–70
- Dauphin, Claudine, "Brothels, baths and babes: prostitution in the Byzantine Holy Land," *Classics Ireland*, 3 (1996), 47–72
- Davies, G. H., "The ark in the Psalms," in B. B. Bruce (ed.), *Promise and Fulfilment: Essays Presented to Professor S.H. Hooke in Celebration of His Ninetieth Birthday, 21st January, 1964* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), 51–61
- de Blois, François, *Burzōy's Voyage to India and the Origin of the Book of Kalīla wa Dimnah* (London: Routledge, 1990)
- "The Pañcatantra: from India to the West, and back," in Ernst J. Grube (ed.), *A Mirror for Princes from India: Illustrated Versions of the Kalilah wa Dimnah, Anvar-i Suhayli, Iyar-i Danish, and Humayun Nameh* (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1991), 10–15
- DeConick, April D. (ed.), *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006)
- de Jong, Albert, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1997)
- "Purification in absentia: on the development of Zoroastrian ritual practice," in Jan Assman and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 301–30
- "One nation under God? The early Sasanians as guardians and destroyers of holy sites," in Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann (eds.), *Götterbilder, Gottesbilder, Weltbilder: Polytheismus und Monotheismus in der Welt der Antike* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 223–38
- de Jonge, M. (ed.), *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (Leiden: Brill, 1978)
- Delling, Gerhard, "The one who sees God in Philo," in Frederick E. Greenspahn, Earle Hilgert, and Burton L. Mack (eds.), *Nourished with Peace: Studies in*

- Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1984), 27–41
- Dēnkard, *The Complete Text of the Pahlavi Dinkard*, ed. D. M. Madan, 2 vols. (Bombay: Fort Printing Press, 1911)
- Dialogue Between a Christian and a Jew*, ed. Arthur Cushman McGiffert (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1889)
- Diamond, Eliezer, *Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2004)
- Diawara, Manthia, "Black spectatorship: problems of identification and resistance," *Screen*, 29/4 (Autumn 1988), 66–79
- Diba, Layla S., "Gol o bolbol," in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982–), vol. XI, fasc. 1, 52–57
- Dick, Michael B., "The Mesopotamian cult statue," in Neal H. Walls (ed.), *Cult Image and Divine Representation in the Ancient Near East* (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2005), 43–67
- Dickie, M. W., "The fathers of the Church and the evil eye," in Henry Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), 9–34
- Diels, Hermann, *Doxographi Graeci* (Berlin, 1897; repr. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1929)
- Dill, Karen E., *How Fantasy Becomes Reality: Seeing Through Media Influence* (Oxford University Press, 2009)
- Dillon, Matthew, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1997)
- Disputation of Sergius the Stylite Against a Jew*, ed. A. P. Hayman, 2 vols. (Louvain: Peeters, 1973)
- Dohrman, Natalie, "The boundaries of the law and the problem of jurisdiction in early Palestinian Midrash," in Catherine Hezser (ed.), *Rabbinic Law in Its Roman and Near Eastern Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 83–103
- Donoghue, David, *Lady Godiva: A Literary History of the Legend* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2003)
- Doty, Alexander, *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993)
- Duden, Barbara, Ivan Illich, and Mother Jerome, "The scopic past and the ethics of the gaze: a plea for the historical study of ocular perception," *Working Papers* no. 6 (University Park, Pa.: Science, Technology, and Society Studies, 1995)
- Duff, Paul Brooks, "Theories of vision and Matthew 5:27–30," in A. Y. Collins and M. M. Mitchell (eds.), *Antiquity and Humanity: Essays on Ancient Religion and Philosophy Presented to Hans Dieter Betz on His Seventieth Birthday* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 63–75
- Eck, Diana, *Darsán: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (Chambersburg, Pa.: Anima Books, 1985)
- Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard, *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994)

- Elgood, Cyril, *A Medical History of Persia and the Eastern Caliphate: From the Earliest Times Until the Year A.D. 1932* (Cambridge University Press, 2010)
- Eli'ezer b. Samuel of Metz, *Sefer yere'im hashalem* (Jerusalem: Makhon Hatam Sofer, 1972; repr. Vilna, 1891–1892–1901–1902)
- Elkins, James, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996)
- Elm, Susanna, "Introduction," in Susanna Elm and Naomi Janowitz (eds.), *Charisma and Society: The 25th Anniversary of Peter Brown's Analysis of the Late Antique Holy Man, special issue of Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 6/3 (1998), 343–51
- Elman, Yaakov, *Authority and Tradition: Toseftan Baraitot in Talmudic Babylonian* (New York: Michael Scharf Publication Trust of the Yeshiva University Press, 1994)
- "The world of the 'Saboraim': cultural aspects of post-redactional additions to the Bavli," in Jeffrey Rubenstein (ed.), *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 383–415
- "Review of Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*," *The Journal of Religion*, 86/4 (October 2006), 700–2
- "He in his cloak and she in her cloak: conflicting images of sexuality in Sasanian Mesopotamia," in Rivka Ulmer (ed.), *Discussing Cultural Influences: Text, Context, and Non-Text in Rabbinic Judaism* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2007), 129–63
- "Middle Persian culture and Babylonian sages: accommodation and resistance in the shaping of rabbinic legal tradition," in Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 181–82
- Elsner, Jaś, "Pausanias: a Greek pilgrim in the Roman world," *Past and Present*, 135 (May 1992), 3–29
- "The origins of the icon: pilgrimage, religion and visual culture in the Roman east as 'resistance' to the centre," in Susan Alcock (ed.), *The Early Roman Empire in the East* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 178–99
- Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph: The Art of the Roman Empire, AD 100–450* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)
- "Between mimesis and divine power: visibility in the Graeco-Roman world," in Robert S. Nelson (ed.), *Visibility Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 45–69
- "Archaeologies and agendas: reflections on late antique Jewish art and early Christian art," *Journal of Roman Studies*, 93 (2003), 114–28
- Roman Eyes: Visibility and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton University Press, 2007)
- Empedocles, *The Poem of Empedocles: A Text and Translation with an Introduction*, trans. Brad Inwood (University of Toronto Press, 2001)
- Ephrem, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, trans. Sebastian P. Brock (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997)

- Epstein, Y., "Some details of the Yerushalmi" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, 6 (1934), 38–55
- Eunapius and Philostratus, *The Lives of the Sophists*, trans. W. C. Wright (London: Heinemann, 1921)
- Euty chius of Alexandria, *Euty chii Patriarchae Alexandrini Annales*, ed. Louis Cheiko, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1906–1909)
- Evans, Elizabeth C., "Physiognomics in the ancient world," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 59/5 (1969), 1–101
- Even-Shoshan, Avraham, *Hamilon hehadash* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1980)
- Febvre, Lucien, "Sensibility and history: how to reconstitute the emotional life of the past," trans. K. Folca, in Peter Burke (ed.), *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 12–26
- Feldherr, Andrew, *Spectacle and Society in Livy's History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998)
- Fincke, Jeanette C., "Cuneiform tablets on eye diseases," in Annie Attia and Gilles Buisson (eds.), *Advances in Mesopotamian Medicine from Hammurabi to Hippocrates: Proceedings of the International Conference "Oeil Malade et Mauvais Oeil," Collège de France, Paris, 23rd June 2006* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 79–104
- Fine, Steven, "Art and the liturgical context of the Sepphoris synagogue mosaic," in Eric M. Meyers (ed.), *Galilee Through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 227–37
- Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Cambridge University Press, 2005)
- "Between texts and archaeology: Nabratein and Jacob of Kefar Nevoia in rabbinic literature," in Eric M. Meyers and Carol L. Meyers (eds.), *Excavations at Ancient Nabratein: Synagogue and Environs* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 3–14
- "Jewish identity at the limes: the Jews of Dura Europos between Rome and Persia," in Erich S. Gruen (ed.), *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), 289–306
- Finger, Stanley, *Origins of Neuroscience: A History of Explorations into Brain Function* (Oxford University Press, 1994)
- Finnegan, Damchö Diana, "For the sake of women, too: ethics and gender in the narratives of the *Mulasarvastivada Vinaya*," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison (2009)
- Finney, Paul Corbey, *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994)
- Fischer, Moshe, *Marble Studies: Roman Palestine and the Marble Trade* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1998)
- Fishbane, Michael, "Extra-biblical exegesis: the sense of not reading in rabbinic midrash," in Peter Ochs (ed.), *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Postcritical Biblical Interpretation* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 172–96

- Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford University Press, 2003)
- Fishbane, Simcha, "Go and enjoy your acquisition: the prostitute in the Babylonian Talmud," *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* n.s. 13 (1998): 71–89
- Foltz, Richard C., *Religions of the Silk Road: Premodern Patterns of Globalization, Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century*, 2nd edn. (New York: Palgrave, 2010)
- Fonrobert, Charlotte Elisheva, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford University Press, 2000)
- "The *Didascalia Apostolorum*: a Mishnah for the disciples of Jesus," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 9/4 (2001), 483–509
- Forrest, S. K. Mendoza, *Witches, Whores, and Sorcerers: The Concept of Evil in Early Iran* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011)
- Foster, Hal (ed.), *Vision and Visuality* (Seattle: Bay View Press, 1988)
- Foucault, Michel, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980)
- Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997)
- Fowden, Elizabeth Key, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)
- Fowden, Garth, "The pagan holy man in late antique society," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 102 (1982), 33–59
- Fowler, M. D., "The meaning of 'lipnê YHWH' in the Old Testament," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 99/3 (1987), 384–90
- Fox, Harry and Tizah Meacham (eds.), *Introducing Tosefta: Textual, Intratextual and Intertextual Studies* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1999)
- Fox, Menahem Zvi, "As if with a finger: the textual history of an expression avoiding anthropomorphism" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, 49/3–4 (1980), 278–91
- Fox, Robin Lane, *Pagans and Christians* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988)
- Fraade, Steven D., *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretations in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991)
- "'The kisses of his mouth': intimacy and intermediacy as performative aspects of a midrashic commentary," in Peter Ochs and Nancy Levene (eds.), *Textual Reasoning: Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the end of the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 52–56
- "Hearing and seeing at Sinai: interpretive traditions," in George J. Brooke, Hindy Najman, and Loren T. Stuckenbruck (eds.), *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 247–68
- "The temple as a marker of Jewish identity before and after 70 CE: the role of the holy vessels in rabbinic memory and imagination," in Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz (eds.), *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 237–65
- "Local Jewish leadership in Roman Palestine: the case of the *parnas* in early rabbinic sources in light of extra-rabbinic evidence," in A. I. Baumgarten, H. Eshel, R. Katzoff, and S. Tzoref (eds.), *Halakhah in Light of Epigraphy* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 155–73

- Fraenkel, Yonah, *Studies in the Spiritual World of the Aggadic Story* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1981)
- Francis, James A., *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second Century Pagan World* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995)
- "Living icons: tracing a motif in verbal and visual representation from the second to fourth centuries C.E.," *The American Journal of Philology*, 124/4 (Winter 2003), 575–600
- Frank, Georgia, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000)
- "Taste and see: the Eucharist and the eyes of faith in the fourth century," *Church History*, 70/4 (2001), 619–43
- Frankfurter, David, "Martyrology and the prurient gaze," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 17/2 (2009), 215–45
- (ed.), *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1998)
- Frede, Michael, "Galen's theology," in Jonathan Barnes and Jacques Jouanna (eds.), *Galien et la Philosophie* (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 2003), 73–126
- Fredrick, David, *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power and the Body* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002)
- Fredriksen, Paula, "Augustine and Israel: *Interpretatio ad litteram*, Jews and Judaism in Augustine's theology of history," *Studia Patristica*, 38 (2001), 119–35
- Friberg, Jöran, *A Remarkable Collection of Babylonian Mathematical Texts* (New York: Springer, 2007)
- Friedheim, Emmanuel, "Historical considerations on the question of the halakhic response of the sages to Graeco-Roman culture in Israel during the period of the Mishnah and Talmud," *AJS Review*, 33/2 (2009), 1–18
- Friedman, Shamma, "Some structural patterns of talmudic *sugya*" (Hebrew), *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 6/3 (1973), 389–402
- "The chapter *Ha'ishah Rabbah*, with a general introduction on the methodology of the investigation of the *sugya*" (Hebrew), in H. Z. Dimitrovsky (ed.), *Investigations and Sources*, vol. 1 (Hebrew) (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1977), 275–441
- "The historical aggadah in the Babylonian Talmud" (Hebrew), in Shamma Friedman (ed.), *Saul Lieberman Memorial Volume* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1993), 1–46
- "The baraitot in the Babylonian Talmud and their relationship to their parallels in the Tosefta" (Hebrew), in Daniel Boyarin, Shamma Friedman, Marc Hirschman, Menahem Schmelzer, and Israel Ta Shma (eds.), *'Atara lehayyim: Studies in Talmudic and Rabbinic Literature in Honor of Professor Haim Zalman Dimitrovsky* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), 163–201
- "The further adventures of Rav Kahana: between Babylonia and Palestine," in Peter Schäfer (ed.), *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, vol. III (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 247–71
- "Anthropomorphism and its eradication," in Willem van Asselt, Paul Van Geest, Daniela Müller, Theo Salemink (eds.), *Iconoclasm and Iconoclasm: Struggle for Religious Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 157–78

- "Anthropomorphism revisited," *Sidra*, 22 (2007), 89–152
- Friedmann, Meir (ed.), *Pesiqta Rabbati* (Vienna: Joseph Kaiser, 1880)
- Frilingos, Christopher A., *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)
- Frontisi-Ducroux, Françoise, "Eros, desire and the gaze," trans. Nancy Kline, in Natalie Kampen (ed.), *Sexuality in Ancient Art* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 81–100
- Frye, Richard N. (ed.), *Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge University Press, 1975)
- "Commerce III: in the Parthian and Sasanian periods," in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982–), vol. VI, fasc. 1, 62
- Furstenberg, Yair, "Idolatry annulment: rabbinic dialogue with paganism under the Roman Empire" (Hebrew), *Reshit: The Shalom Hartman Institute Academic Annual*, 1 (2009), 117–44
- "The rabbinic view of idolatry and the Roman political conception of divinity," *Journal of Religion*, 90/3 (2010), 335–66
- Gafni, Isaiah M., *The Jews of Babylonia in the Talmudic Era* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1990)
- "Babylonian Rabbinic culture," in David Biale (ed.), *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 225–65
- "Rethinking Talmudic history: the challenge of literary and redaction criticism," *Jewish History*, 25 (2011), 355–75
- Gager, John, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983)
- Galen, *Claudii Galeni Opera Omnia*, ed. C. G. Kühn, 20 vols. (Leipzig: C. Knobloch, 1821–1833; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1964–1965)
- De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, ed. and trans. Phillip de Lacy, *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum* v. 4, 1, 2 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1984)
- Gane, Roy E., "'Bread of the presence' and creator-in-residence," *Vetus Testamentum*, 42/2 (1992), 179–203
- Garrison, James D., *Pietas from Vergil to Dryden* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992)
- Gearney, Jane, *On the Epistemology of the Senses in Early Chinese Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002)
- Geiger, Abraham, *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel* (Breslau, 1857)
- Nachgelassene Schriften*, 5 vols. (Berlin: L. Gerschel, 1875–78)
- Geller, Markham J., "Akkadian evil eye incantations from Assur," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 94 (2004), 52–58
- "Akkadian healing therapies in the Babylonian Talmud," *Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte Preprint*, 259 (2004), 1–60
- "West meets East: early Greek and Babylonian diagnosis," in H. F. J. Horstmannshoff and M. Stol (eds.), *Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman Medicine* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 11–62
- Genette, Gérard, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980)

- Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988)
- Gerhardsson, Birger, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998)
- Gifford, Edward S., *The Evil Eye: Studies in the Folklore of Vision* (New York: Macmillan, 1958)
- Gignoux, Philippe, "Dēnkard," in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 1994), vol. VII, fasc. 3, 284–89
- Man and Cosmos in Ancient Iran* (Rome: Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2001)
- "Health in Persia i, pre-Islamic period," in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2003), vol. XI, fasc. 1, 102–4
- "Zādspram," in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopedia Iranica* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2005) (www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zadspram)
- Ginzberg, Louis, *Some Abbreviations, Unrecognized or Misunderstood, in the Text of the Jerusalem Talmud* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1914)
- Glancy, Jennifer A., "The accused: Susanna and her readers," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 58 (1993), 103–16
- Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010)
- Gleason, Maud W., "The semiotics of gender: physiognomy and self-fashioning in the second century C.E.," in David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma P. Zeitlin (eds.), *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (Princeton University Press, 1990), 389–415
- Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton University Press, 1995)
- Gnoli, Gherardo, "Farr(ah)," in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982–), vol. IX, fasc. 3, 312–19
- "A Sasanian iconography of the Dēn," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 7 (1993), 79–85
- Goering, Gregory Schmidt, *Wisdom's Root Revealed: Ben Sira and the Election of Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 2009)
- "Sapiential synesthesia: the conceptual blending of light and word in Ben Sira's wisdom instruction," in Bonnie Howe and Joel Green (eds.), *Cognitive Linguistic Readings of Biblical Texts* (De Gruyter, forthcoming)
- Goldenberg, Robert, "The destruction of the Jerusalem temple: its meaning and its consequences," in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. IV: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 191–205
- Goldhill, Simon, "The erotic eye: visual stimulation and cultural conflict," in Simon Goldhill (ed.), *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 154–94

- Goldstein, Thomas, *Dawn of Modern Science: From the Ancient Greeks to the Renaissance* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1995)
- Golitzin, Alexander, "The place of the presence of God: Aphrahat of Persia's portrait of the Christian holy man," in *Sunaxis Eucharistias: Studies in Honor of Archimandrite Aimilianos of Simonos Petras, Mount Athos* (Athens: Indiktos, 2003), 391–447
- Gombrich, E. H., *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960)
- Gonda, Jan, *Eye and Gaze in the Veda* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1969)
- Vedic Ritual: The Non-Solemn Rites* (Leiden: Brill, 1980)
- Goodblatt, David M., "The Babylonian Talmud," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II*, 19/2 (1979), 257–336 (repr. in Jacob Neusner [ed.], *The Study of Ancient Judaism*, vol. 11: *The Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds* [Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1981], 120–99)
- "The history of the Babylonian academies," in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 4: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 821–39
- "The political and social history of the Jewish community in the Land of Israel, c.235–638," in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 4: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 404–30
- Goodman, Martin, "The Jewish image of God in late antiquity," in Richard Kalmin and Seth Schwartz (eds.), *Jewish Culture and Society under the Christian Roman Empire* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2003), 133–45
- Goodman, Martin and Philip Alexander (eds.), *Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late-Roman Palestine* (Oxford University Press, 2010)
- Gordon, Ian E., *Theories of Visual Perception* (Hove: Psychology Press, 2004)
- Goshen Gottstein, Alon, "The body as image of God in rabbinic literature," *Harvard Theological Review*, 87/2 (April, 1994), 171–95
- Graetz, Heinrich, *The Structure of Jewish History, and Other Essays*, trans. Ismar Schorsch (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1975)
- Graham, A. C. and Nathan Sivin, "A systematic approach to the Mohist optics," in Shigeru Nakayama and Nathan Sivin (eds.), *Chinese Science: Explorations of an Ancient Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1973), 105–52
- Gray, Alyssa M., "Is critical rabbinic biography possible?" *Prooftexts*, 23/3 (Fall 2003), 376–82
- "The power conferred by distance from power: redaction and meaning in b. AZ 10a–11a," in Jeffrey Rubenstein (ed.), *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammam) to the Aggadah* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 23–70
- A Talmud in Exile: The Influence of Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah on the Formation of Bavli Avodah Zarah* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2005)
- Green, Deborah A., *The Aroma of Righteousness: Scent and Seduction in Rabbinic Life and Literature* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011)

- Green, William Scott, "What's in a name? The problematic of rabbinic 'biography,'" in William Scott Green (ed.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, vol. 1 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholar's Press, 1978), 77–96
- "Palestinian holy men: charismatic leadership and rabbinic traditions," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II*, 19/2 (1979), 619–47
- Gregg, Robert C., "Marking religious and ethnic boundaries: cases from the ancient Golan Heights," *Church History*, 69/3 (2000), 519–57
- Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, ed. Marcus Adriaen, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 143 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1979)
- Gregory of Nyssa, "Commentarius in Canticum canticorum", *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. VI, ed. Werner Jaeger and Hermann Langerbeck (Leiden: Brill, 1960)
- From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, intro. Jean Daniélou, ed. and trans. Herbert Musurillo (New York: Scribner, 1961)
- Gruber, Mayer I., *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East*, 2 vols. (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980)
- Gruenwald, Itamar, "New fragments of Hekhalot literature" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, 38 (1969), 354–72
- "Further Jewish physiognomic and chiromantic fragments" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, 40 (1971), 301–19
- Gruschow, Lisa, *Writing the Wayward Wife: Rabbinic Interpretations of Sotah* (Leiden: Brill, 2006)
- Guras, Dimitri, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998)
- Hakim, Besim S., "Julian of Ascalon's treatise of construction and design rules from sixth century Palestine," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 60/1 (2001), 4–25
- "Mediterranean urban and building codes: origins, content, impact, and lessons," *Urban Design International*, 13 (2008), 21–40
- Halbertal, Moshe, "Coexisting with the enemy: Jews and pagans in the Mishnah," in Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 159–72
- Halbertal, Moshe and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992)
- Halivni, David Weiss, *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)
- Introductions to Sources and Traditions: Studies in the Formation of the Talmud* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2009)
- Hall, Jon, "The deference-greeting in Roman society," *Maia*, 50 (1998), 413–26
- Harari, Yuval, "The sages and the occult," in Shmuel Safrai, Zeev Safrai, Joshua Schwartz, and Peter J. Tomson (eds.), *The Literature of the Sages, Second Part: Midrash and Targum, Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism, Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature* (Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2006), 521–66

- Haraway, Donna, "The persistence of vision," in Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury (eds.), *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 283–95
- Harris, Jay M., "Midrash Halachah," in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. iv: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 336–68
- Hartog, François, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988)
- Hartsock, Chad, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts: The Use of Physical Features in Characterization* (Leiden: Brill, 2008)
- Harvey, Susan Ashbrook, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990)
- Scenting Salvation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006)
- Hasan-Rokem, Galit, *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature* (Stanford University Press, 2000)
- Tales of the Neighborhood: Jewish Narrative Dialogues in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003)
- "Rabbi Meir, may his lamp shine: on the name as a sign," in Emily Bilski, Amitai Mendelsohn, and Avigdor Shinan (eds.), *Lights: Light in Literature, Thought and Art* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2005), 120–27
- "Rabbi Meir, the illuminated and the illuminating: interpreting experience," in Carol Bakhos (ed.), *Current Trends in the Study of Midrash* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 227–43
- Hauptman, Judith, *Rereading the Mishnah: A New Approach to Ancient Jewish Texts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005)
- Hayes, Christine, *Between the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds: Accounting for Halakhic Difference in Selected Sugyot from Tractate Avodah Zarah* (Oxford University Press, 1997)
- Hayward, Robert C. T., "Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and the bread of the presence," in Paul V. M. Fesher (ed.), *Targum and Scripture: Studies in Aramaic Translations and Interpretation in Memory of Ernest G. Clarke* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 115–28
- Henderson, John, *Pliny's Statue: The Letters, Self-Portraiture and Classical Art* (University of Exeter Press, 2002)
- Hepner, Gershon, *Legal Friction: Law, Narrative, and Identity Politics in Biblical Israel* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2010)
- Herman, Geoffrey, "The story of Rav Kahana (BT Baba Qamma 117a-b) in light of Armeno-Persian sources," *Irano-Judaica*, 6 (2008), 53–86
- Herr, Moses D., "The historical significance of the dialogues between Jewish sages and Roman dignitaries," *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, 22 (1971), 123–50
- Herrmann, G., "The rock reliefs of Sasanian Iran," in J. E. Curtis (ed.), *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Parthian and Sasanian Periods: Rejection and Revival c. 238 BC–AD 642, Proceedings of a Seminar in Memory of Vladimir G. Lukonin* (London: British Museum, 2000), 35–45

- Heschel, Abraham Joshua, *Heavenly Torah: as Refracted Through the Generations*, trans. Gordon Tucker (New York: Continuum, 2006)
- Hezser, Catherine, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997)
- Jewish Travel in Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011)
- Hillis, Ken, *Digital Sensations: Space, Identity, and Embodiment in Virtual Reality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999)
- Hirshman, Marc, *The Stabilization of Rabbinic Culture, 100 C.E.–350 C.E.: Texts on Education* (Oxford University Press, 2009)
- “Yearning for intimacy: ‘Pesikta d’Rav Kahana’ and the temple,” in Deborah A. Green and Laura S. Lieber (eds.), *Scriptural Exegesis: The Shapes of Culture and the Religious Imagination, Essays in Honour of Michael Fishbane* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 135–45
- Hogendijk, Jan P. and A. I. Sabra, *The Enterprise of Science in Islam: New Perspectives* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003)
- Hollander, H. E. and Marinus de Jonge, trans., *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1985)
- Holowchak, M. Andrew, *Ancient Science and Dreams: Oneirology in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2002)
- hooks, bell, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992)
- Horbury, William, “Land, sanctuary and worship,” in J. M. G. Barclay and J. P. McMurdo Sweet (eds.), *Early Christian Thought in Its Jewish Context* (Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- Horstkotte, Silke, “Seeing or speaking: visual narratology and focalization, literature to film,” in Sandra Heinen and Roy Sommer (eds.), *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 170–92
- Hoskins, J., “Agency, biography and objects,” in Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Kuechler-Fogden, Mike Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer (eds.), *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: SAGE Publications), 74–84
- Howes, David, *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003)
- Hoyrup, Jens, “Algebra, surveyors,” in Helaine Selin (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, 4 vols., 2nd edn. (Dordrecht: Springer-Verlag, 2008), vol. 1, 52–55
- Hubel, David H., *Eye, Brain, and Vision* (New York: Scientific American Library, 1988)
- Hubel, David H. and Torsten N. Wiesel, *Brain and Visual Perception: The Story of a Fifteen-Year Collaboration* (Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Ingold, Tim, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000)
- Irigaray, Luce, *The Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985)
- Irwin, M. E., “Roses and the bodies of beautiful women,” *Echos du monde classique*, 13 (1994), 1–13

- Iwao, M. and D. Gentner, "A cross-linguistic study of early word meaning: universal ontology and linguistic influence," *Cognition*, 62 (1997), 169–200
- Jackson II, Ronald and Jamie Moshin, "Scripting Jewishness within the satire *The Hebrew Hammer*," in Kathleen Glenister Roberts and Ronald C. Arnett (eds.), *Communication Ethics: Between Cosmopolitanism and Provinciality* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2008), 187–214
- Jacobs, Andrew S., *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford University Press, 2004)
- Jacobs, Martin, *Die Institution des jüdischen Patriarchen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995)
- Jaffee, Martin S., *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE* (Oxford University Press, 2001)
- "Rabbinic authorship as a collective enterprise," in Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17–37
- Jahn, Manfred, "Windows of focalization: deconstructing and reconstructing a narratological concept," *Style*, 30/2 (1996), 241–67
- Jastrow, Marcus, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (London and New York, 1886–1903)
- Jay, Martin, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993)
- "Scopic regime," in Wolfgang Donsbach (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Communication* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley/Blackwell, 2008), Blackwell Reference Online.
- "In the realm of the senses: an introduction," *The American Historical Review*, 116/2 (April 2011), 307–15
- Jensen, Robin, "The femininity of Christ in early Christian iconography," *Studia Patristica*, 29 (1995), 269–82
- Jerome, *The Homilies of St. Jerome*, trans. S. Marie Liguori Ewald, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1964–1966)
- Jesch, Tatjana and Malte Stein, "Perspectivization and focalization: two concepts – one meaning? An attempt at conceptual differentiation," in Peter Hühn, Wolf Schmid, and Jörg Schönert (eds.), *Point of View, Perspective, and Focalization: Modeling Mediation in Narrative* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 59–77
- John Chrysostom, *John Chrysostom: Commentary on Psalms*, trans. Robert Charles Hill, 2 vols. (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998)
- Josephus Flavius, *Josephus*, ed. H. St. J. Thackeray, R. Marcus, L. H. Feldman, Loeb Classical Library, 13 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926–1965).
- Jost, François, "Narration(s): en deçà et au-delà," *Communications*, 38 (1984), 192–212
- Julian, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, trans. W. C. Wright, Loeb Classical Library, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969–1980)

- Kalmin, Richard, "Christians and heretics in rabbinic literature of late antiquity," *Harvard Theological Review*, 87/2 (1994), 155–69
- Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors in Rabbinic Babylonia* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1994)
- The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999)
- "Holy men, rabbis and demonic sages in late antiquity," in Richard Kalmin and Seth Schwartz (eds.), *Jewish Culture and Society under the Christian Roman Empire* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2003), 211–53
- "Holy men and rabbis in late antiquity," in Lee I. Levine (ed.), *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2004), 210–32
- "The formation and character of the Babylonian Talmud," in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. iv: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 840–76
- Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)
- "The evil eye in rabbinic literature of late antiquity," in Benjamin Isaac and Yuval Shahar (eds.), *Judaea-Palaestina, Babylon and Rome: Jews in Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 111–38
- Kanga, M. F., 'Astwihād,' *Encyclopædia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), vol. II, fasc. 8, 873.
- Keane, Webb, "The evidence of the senses and the materiality of religion," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 14/1 (2008), 110–27
- Kessler, Gwynn, *Conceiving Israel: The Fetus in Rabbinic Narratives* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009)
- Kessler, Herbert L., "Shaded with dust: Jewish eyes on Christian art," in Herbert L. Kessler and David Nirenberg (eds.), *Judaism and Christian Art: Aesthetic Anxieties from the Catacombs to Colonialism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 74–115
- Kestnbaum, Ellyn, *Culture on Ice: Figure Skating & Cultural Meaning* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003)
- Khaleghi-Motlagh, Djalal, "Borzūya," in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopædia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1990), vol. IV, fasc. 4, 381–82
- "Erotic literature," in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopædia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1998), vol. VIII, fasc. 5, 558–60
- Kheirandish, Elaheh, "Optics," in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopædia Iranica* (2010) (www.iranicaonline.org/articles/optics)
- Kinnard, Jacob N., "The field of the Buddha's presence," in David Germano and Kevin Trainor (eds.), *Embodying the Dharma: Buddhist Relic Veneration in Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 117–44
- Kirschner, Robert, "Vocation of holiness in late antiquity," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 38 (1984), 105–24
- Kister, Menahem, "Another fragment for the Talmudic lexicon" (Hebrew), in Moshe Bar-Asher and David Rosenthal (eds.), *Studies in Talmud*, vol. II (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993), 431–77

- Klein, Michael L., "The preposition 'qdm' ('before'); a pseudo-anti-anthropomorphism in the Targums," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 30/2 (1979), 502–7
- Kleinberg-Levin, David Michael, *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993)
- Knohl, Israel, "Post-biblical sectarianism and the priestly schools" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, 60/2 (1991), 139–46
- Koltun-Fromm, Naomi, *Hermeneutics of Holiness: Ancient Jewish and Christian Notions of Sexuality and Religious Community* (Oxford University Press, 2010)
- Konstan, David, *Sexual Symmetry: Love in the Ancient Novel and Related Genres* (Princeton University Press, 1994)
- Koren, Sharon, "Kabbalistic physiology: Isaac the blind, Nahmanides, and Moses de Leon on menstruation," *AJS Review*, 28 (2004), 317–39
- Kraeling, Carl H., *The Synagogue: The Excavations at Dura-Europus, Final Report VIII, Part 1* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1956)
- Kraemer, David, *Reading the Rabbis: The Talmud as Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996)
- "The Mishnah," in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. iv: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 299–315
- Kraemer, Ross S. *When Aseneth Met Joseph: A Late Antique Tale of the Biblical Patriarch and His Egyptian Wife, Reconsidered* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)
- Kreyenbroek, Philip G., "Cosmogony and cosmology in Zoroastrianism," in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 1993), 303–7
- Krueger, Derek, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)
- Kuefler, Mathew, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* (University of Chicago Press, 2001)
- Kugel, James, "Two introductions to Midrash," *Prooftexts*, 3/2 (1983), 131–55
- In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1990)
- Lacan, Jacques, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998)
- Laglands, Rebecca, *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge University Press, 2006)
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh* (New York: Basic Books, 1999)
- Lapin, Hayim, "Hegemony and its discontents: Palestinian rabbis as a late Roman provincial population," in Richard Kalmin and Seth Schwartz (eds.), *Jewish Culture and Society under the Christian Roman Empire* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2003), 319–48
- "The origins and development of the rabbinic movement in the Land of Israel," in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. iv: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 206–29

- Lapp, Eric C., "Lamps," in Rebecca Martin Nagy, Carol L. Meyers, Eric M. Meyers, and Zeev Weiss (eds.), *Sepphoris in Galilee: Crosscurrents of Culture* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 218–24
- Lateiner, Donald, "Humiliation and immobility in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*," *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 131 (2001), 217–55
- Lee, A. D., *Information and Frontiers: Roman Foreign Relations in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge University Press, 1993)
- Lehmann, Clayton, "The city and the text," in Avner Raban and Kenneth G. Holum (eds.), *Caesarea Maritima: A Retrospective after Two Millennia* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 381–91
- Leiter, Samuel, "Worthiness, acclamation, and appointment: some rabbinic terms," *Proceedings, American Academy for Jewish Research*, 41–42 (1973–1974), 137–68
- Lev, Sarra, "Sotah: rabbinic pornography?" in Danya Ruttenberg (ed.), *The Passionate Torah: Sex and Judaism* (New York University Press, 2009), 7–23
- Levene, Dan, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls: Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 2003).
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Le totémisme aujourd'hui* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962)
- Levin, David M., *The Opening of Vision: Nihilism and the Post-Modern Situation* (New York: Routledge, 1988)
(ed.), *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993)
- Levine, Baruch, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989)
- Levine, David, "Holy men and rabbis in Talmudic antiquity," in Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz (eds.), *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 53–57
"Rabbis, preachers, and aggadists: an aspect of Jewish culture in third- and fourth-century Palestine," in Zeev Weiss, Oded Irshai, Jodi Magness, and Seth Schwartz (eds.), *Follow the Wise: Studies in Jewish History and Culture in Honor of Lee I. Levine* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 275–96
- Levine, Lee I., "R. Abbahu of Caesarea," in Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, 4 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1975), vol. iv, 56–76
The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 1989)
"Status of the Patriarch in the third and fourth centuries: sources and methodology," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 46 (1996), 1–32
The Ancient Synagogue (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000)
"The history and significance of the menorah in antiquity," in Lee I. Levine and Zeev Weiss (eds.), *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity* (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2000), 131–53
- Levine, Lee I. and Zeev Weiss (eds.), *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity* (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2000)

- Levinson, Joshua, "The tragedy of romance: a case of literary exile," *Harvard Theological Review*, 89 (1996), 227–44
- "The athlete of piety: fatal fictions in rabbinic literature" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, 68 (1999), 61–86
- "Bodies and bo(a)rders: emerging fictions of identity in late antiquity," *Harvard Theological Review*, 93/4 (2000), 343–72
- "Tragedies naturally performed: fatal charades, *parodia sacra*, and the death of Titus," in Richard Kalmin and Seth Schwartz (eds.), *Jewish Culture and Society under the Christian Roman Empire* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2003), 349–82
- Leyerle, Blake, "John Chrysostom on the gaze," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 1 (1993), 160–63
- Lieber, Elinor, "Asaf's 'Book of Medicines': a Hebrew encyclopedia of Greek and Jewish medicine, possibly compiled in Byzantium on an Indian model," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 38 (1984), 233–49
- Lieber, Laura, "Themes and variations: Yannai on Exodus 3:1 and Deuteronomy 6:4," *Prooftexts*, 30/2 (2010), 180–216
- Lieberman, Saul, "Palestine in the third and fourth centuries," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 36 (1946), 329–70
- Tosefta kifshutah* (Hebrew), 3 vols. (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1955–1973)
- "A few words on the book by Julian the Architect of Ascalon" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, 40 (1971), 409–17
- Hayerushalmi kifshuto* (Hebrew), 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1934; repr. New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2008)
- Lim, Richard, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)
- Limberis, Vasiliki "The eyes infected by evil: Basil of Caesarea's Homily, On Envy," *Harvard Theological Review*, 84 (1991), 163–84
- Lincoln, Bruce, "Physiological speculation and social patterning in a Pahlavi text," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 108 (1988), 135–40
- "The center of the world and the origins of life," *History of Religions*, 40/4 (2001), 311–26
- "Human unity and diversity in Zoroastrian mythology," *History of Religions*, 50 (2010), 7–20
- Lindberg, David C., *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (University of Chicago Press, 1976)
- Loewe, Herbert, *Render Unto Caesar: Religious and Political Loyalty in Palestine* (Cambridge University Press, 1940)
- Loewe, Raphael, "The 'plain' meaning of scripture in early Jewish exegesis," *Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies in London*, 1 (1964), 140–85
- Lopez, Davina C., *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008)
- Lorberbaum, Yair, *Image of God: Halakhah and Aggadah* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Schocken, 2004)

- Lubin, Timothy, "The virtuosic exegesis of the brahmavadin and the rabbi," *Numen: International Journal for the History of Religions*, 49/4 (2002), 427–59
- Lucian, *Lucian VIII*, trans. M. D. Macleod, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967)
- Lupyan, Gary and Michael J. Spivey, "Making the invisible visible: verbal but not visual cues enhance visual detection," *PLoS ONE*, 5/7 (2010), 5–12
- MacCormack, Sabine M., *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981)
- MacDermot, Violet, *The Cult of the Seer in the Ancient Middle East: A Contribution to Current research on Hallucinations Drawn from Coptic and Other Texts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971)
- MacKenzie, D. Neil, "Bundahišn," in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1989), vol. iv, fasc. 5, 547–51
- Makover-Balikov, Sherry, "Women of the veil," *Maariv*, January 18, 2008 (www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/684/453.html)
- Malandra, William W., "Avestan Zānu.Drājah: an obscene gesture," *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 22/4 (1980), 283–86
- An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion: Readings from the Avesta and the Achaemenid Inscriptions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983)
- Mandel, Paul, "The Tosefta," in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. iv: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 316–35
- Marcus, David, "Some antiphrastic euphemisms for a blind person in Akkadian and other Semitic languages," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 100/3 (1980), 307–10
- Marcus, Joel, "A note on Markan optics," *New Testament Studies*, 45/2 (1999), 250–56
- "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Didascalia Apostolorum: a common Jewish Christian milieu?" *Journal of Theological Studies*, 61 (2010), 596–626
- Margaliot, Mordecai, *Laws of the Land of Israel from the Genizah* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1973)
- (ed.), *Sefer Harazim* (Jerusalem: American Academy of Jewish Research, 1966)
- Mark the Deacon, *The Life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza*, trans. George Francis Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913)
- Marks, Laura, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000)
- Markus, Robert A., *Signs and Meanings: World and Text in Ancient Christianity* (Liverpool University Press, 1996)
- Martin, Dale B., *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999)
- Maxwell, Anne, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the 'Native' and the Making of European Identities* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999)

- McDaniel, Walton Brooks, "The pupula duplex and other tokens of an 'evil eye' in the light of ophthalmology," *Classical Philology*, 13 (1918), 335–46
- McGinn, Thomas A. J., *The Economy of Prostitution in the Roman World: A Study of Social History and the Brothel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004)
- McMahan, David L., *Empty Vision: Metaphor and Visionary Imaginary in Mahāyāna Buddhism* (London: Routledge, 2002)
- Meshorer, Ya'akov, *Ancient Jewish Coinage* (Dix Hills, NY: Amphora Books, 1982)
- Metz, Christian, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982)
- Meyers, Eric, "Jewish art and architecture in the Land of Israel, 70–c. 235," in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. IV: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 174–90
- Migge, Bettina, "Greeting and social change," in Susanne Mühleisen and Bettina Migge (eds.), *Politeness and Face in Caribbean Creoles* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005), 121–45
- Miles, Margaret, "Vision: the eye of the body and the eye of the mind in Saint Augustine," *Journal of Religion*, 63/2 (1983), 125–42
- Milikowsky, Chaim, "The *status quaestionis* of research into rabbinic literature," in Martin Goodman and Philip Alexander (eds.), *Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late-Roman Palestine* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 67–78
- Miller, Patricia Cox, "The little blue flower is red': relics and the poetizing of the body," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 8 (2000), 213–36
- "Strategies of representation in collective biography," in Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 209–54
- The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009)
- Miller, Stuart S., *Sages and Commoners in Late Antique 'Erez Israel: A Philological Inquiry into Local Traditions in Talmud Yerushalmi* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006)
- Mitchell, W. J. T., "Showing seeing: a critique of visual culture," *Journal of Visual Culture*, 1/2 (August 2002), 165–82
- Montgomery, J. A., "Some early amulets from Palestine," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 31/3 (1911), 272–81
- Montserrat, Dominic, *Sex and Society in Græco-Roman Egypt* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996)
- Morales, Helen, *Vision and Narrative in Achilles Tatius' Leucippe and Clitophon* (Cambridge University Press, 2004)
- Moreshet, Menachem, "New and revived verbs in the *baraitot* of the Bavli" (Hebrew), in M. Z. Kaddari (ed.), *Archive of the New Dictionary of Rabbinic Literature* (Hebrew), vol. 1 (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1972), 117–62

- "Further studies on the language of the Hebrew *baraitot* in the Bavli and the Yerushalmi" (Hebrew), in M. Z. Kaddari (ed.), *Archive of the New Dictionary of Rabbinic Literature* (Hebrew), vol. 11 (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1974), 31–43
- "The Hebrew *baraitot* in the Bavli are not MHEI" (Hebrew), in E. Y. Kutsher (ed.), *Hanokh Yalon Memorial Volume* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1974), 275–314
- Moscovitz, Leib, "Transferred *sugyot* in the Yerushalmi" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, 60 (1991), 19–661
- "The relationship between the Yerushalmi and *Leviticus Rabbah*: a re-examination" (Hebrew), *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 11/1 (1994), 31–38
- "The formation and character of the Jerusalem Talmud," in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 1v: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 663–77
- Moshe-David, Ahikam, "Tiberias: the kashrut division versus the mannequins," *Maariv*, May 13, 2009 (www.nrg.co.il/online/54/ART1/890/140.html)
- Moss, Cyril, "Jacob of Serugh's homilies on the spectacles of the theater," *Le Muséon*, 48 (1935), 87–112
- Mulvey, Laura, "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema," *Screen*, 16/3 (1975), 6–18
Visual and Other Pleasures (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989)
- "Afterthoughts on 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' inspired by *Duel in the Sun* (King Vidor 1946)," in Sue Thornham (ed.), *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader* (Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 122–30
- Muntner, Süssmann (ed.), *The Book of Asaf the Physician* (Hebrew), *Qorot*, 3–6 (1965–1972)
- Naeh, Shlomo, "En em lamasoret, or did the tannaim interpret the biblical text not according to its received reading?" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 62/3–4 (1992), 401–48
- "'Make yourself many rooms': another look at the utterances of the sages about controversy" (Hebrew), in Avi Sagi and Zvi Zohar (eds.), *Renewing Jewish Commitment: The Work and Thought of David Hartman* (Jerusalem: Shalom Hartman Institute and Kibbutz Hameuhad, 2001), 851–75
- "The art of memory: constructions of memory and patterns of text in rabbinic literature" (Hebrew), in Yaakov Sussman and David Rosenthal (eds.), *Studies in Talmud*, vol. III (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005), 543–89
- Nagler-Cohen, Liron, "Observe: so works the propaganda of the Taliban Rabbis," *Ynet News*, December 1, 2011 (www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4155586,00.html)
- Nau, F., "Histoires des solitaires égyptiens," *Revue de l'orient chrétien*, 12 (1907), 43–69
- Naveh, Joseph and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985)
Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993)

- Neis, Rachel, "Embracing icons," *Images: A Journal of Jewish Art and Culture*, 1 (2007), 26–54.
- "Eyeing Idols: rabbinic viewing practices in late antiquity," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 102/4 (2012): 533–60
- "Pilgrimage itineraries: seeing the past through rabbinic eyes," *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, 19 (forthcoming), 1–33
- Newman, Hillel I., *The Ma'asim of the People of the Land of Israel: Halakhah and History in Byzantine Palestine* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2011)
- Newmyer, Steven, "Talmudic medicine and Greco-Roman science: crosscurrents and resistance," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II*, 37/3 (1996), 2895–911
- Niehoff, Maren, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001)
- Nightingale, Andrea Wilson, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in its Cultural Context* (Cambridge University Press, 2004)
- Nisbett, Richard E. and Ara Norenzayan, "Culture and cognition," in D. L. Medin and H. Pashler (eds.), *Stevens Handbook of Experimental Psychology*, vol. 11: *Cognition*, 3rd edn. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), 561–97
- Novick, Akiva, "Sight unseen en route to rabbi's tomb," *Ynet News*, September 7, 2010 (www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3951045,00.html)
- Nylan, Michael, "Beliefs about seeing: optics and moral technologies in Early China," *Asia Major*, 21/1 (2008), 89–132
- Olin, Margaret, *A Nation Without Art* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001)
- Olivelle, P., *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Manava* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)
- O'Meara, Dominic J. (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought* (Norfolk, Va.: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1981)
- Oppenheim, A. Leo, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (University of Chicago Press, 1964)
- Oppenheim, A. Leo, Erica Reiner, Robert D. Biggs et al. (eds.), *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, 21 volumes (University of Chicago Press, 1956–2007)
- Oppenheimer, Aharon, "Those of the school of Rabbi Yannai," in Aharon Oppenheimer (ed.), *Between Rome and Babylon: Studies in Jewish Leadership and Society* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 156–65
- Orlov, Andrei, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005)
- Osborne, Robin, "Looking on Greek style: does the sculpted girl speak to women too?" in Ian M. Morris (ed.), *Classical Greece: Ancient Histories and Modern Archaeologies* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 81–96
- Oshima, Takayoshi, "The Babylonian God Marduk," in Gwendolyn Leick (ed.), *The Babylonian World* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 352–55
- Otter, Chris, *The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800–1910* (University of Chicago Press, 2008)
- The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, V, ed. Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt (London and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908), no. 840.

- Pachomius, *The Life of Pachomius (Vita Prima Graeca)*, trans. Apostolos A. Athanassakis (Missoula, Mont.: Scholar's Press, 1975)
- Pachomian Koinonia: The Life of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples*, trans. Armand Veilleux, 2 vols. (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1981)
- Palladius, *The Lausiac History of Palladius: A Critical Discussion, together with Notes on Early Monachism*, ed. Cuthbert Butler, 2 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1898–1904)
- Palladius: The Lausiac History*, trans. Robert T. Meyer (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1965)
- Panofsky, Erwin, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher Wood (New York: Zone Books, 1997)
- Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 162 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1857–1866)
- Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1844–1864)
- Pazdernik, Charles F., "Paying attention to the man behind the curtain: disclosing and withholding the imperial presence in Justinianic Constantinople," in Thorsten Fögen and Mireille M. Lee (eds.), *Bodies and Boundaries in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 63–86
- Pentcheva, Bissera V., *The Sensual Icon* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010)
- Pesic, Peter, "Seeing the Forms," *The Internet Journal of the International Plato Society*, 7 (<http://gramata.univ-parisi.fr/Plato/spip.php?article757>)
- Peskowitz, Miriam, *Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender and History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997)
- Petsalis-Diomidis, Alexia, *Truly Beyond Wonders: Aelius Aristides and the Cult of Asklepios* (Oxford University Press, 2010)
- Philo, *Philo with an English Translation*, vol. x: *On the Embassy to Gaius*, trans. F. H. Colson (London: Heinemann, 1962)
- Piras, Andrea, "Āsna- xratu: innate or rising wisdom?" *East and West*, 46 (1996), 9–20
- Pliny the Elder, *The Elder Pliny on the Human Animal: Natural History Book 7*, trans. Mary Beagon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005)
- Popović, Mladen, *Reading the Human Body: Physiognomics and Astrology in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Hellenistic–Early Roman Period Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007)
- Porter, Roy, "History of the body," in Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 206–32
- Possekel, Ute, *Evidence of Greek Philosophical Concepts in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1988)
- Pratt, Mary Louise, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992)
- Price, S. R. F., *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge University Press, 1984)
- Ptolemy, *Optica*, trans. Mark A. Smith, *Ptolemy's Theory of Visual Perception* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1996)

- Purcell, Nicholas, "Does Caesar mime?" in Bettina Bergmann and Christine Kondoleon (eds.), *The Art of Ancient Spectacle* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), 181–93
- Qiupeng, Jin, "Optics," in *Ancient China's Technology and Science, Compiled by the Institute of the History of Natural Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1983), 166–67
- Rabinovitz, Zvi Meir, *The Liturgical Poems of R. Yannai According to the Triennial Cycle of the Torah and the Holidays* (Hebrew), 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1985)
- Rapp, Claudia, "'For next to God, you are my salvation': reflections on the rise of the holy man in late antiquity," in J. Howard-Johnston and P. A. Hayward (eds.), *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 63–81
- Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005)
- Rashed, Roshdi (ed.), *Thabit ibn Qurra: Science and Philosophy in Ninth-Century Baghdad* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009)
- Reardon, B. P. (ed.), *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989)
- Reif, Stefan, "A root to look up? A study of the Hebrew "ns' 'yn,'" *Vetus Testamentum Supplements*, 36 (1985), 230–44.
- Reinink, Gerrit J., "Theology and medicine in Jundishapur: cultural change in the Nestorian school tradition," in Alasdair A. MacDonald, Michael W. Twomey, and Gerrit J. Reinink (eds.), *Learned Antiquity: Scholarship and Society in the Near East, the Greco-Roman World and the Early Medieval West* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2003), 163–74
- Remes, Pauliina, *Neoplatonism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008)
- Richardson, C. C., *Early Christian Fathers* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953; repr. New York: Macmillan, 1970)
- Riegl, Alois, *Late Roman Art Industry*, trans. Rolf Winkes (Rome: G. Bretschneider, 1985)
- Rindisbacher, Hans J., *The Smell of Books: A Cultural-Historical Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992)
- Roberts, Alexander and James Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, 10 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1867–1873)
- Robson, Eleanor, *Mathematics in Ancient Iraq: A Social History* (Princeton University Press, 2008)
- Rogers, Sheena, "Truth and meaning in pictorial space," in Heiko Hecht and Margaret Atherton (eds.), *Looking into Pictures: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Pictorial Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 301–20
- Rosen Zvi, Ishay, "Billah the temptress: the 'Testament of Reuben' and the making of rabbinic anthropology," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 96 (2006), 65–94
- "Responsive blessings and the development of the Tannaitic liturgical system" (Hebrew), *Jewish Studies: An Internet Journal*, 7 (2008), 1–29

- “‘You shall destroy all places’: the polemic on the obligation to destroy idolatry in Tannaitic literature” (Hebrew), *Reshit: The Shalom Hartman Institute Academic Annual*, 1 (2009), 91–115
- Rosenthal, David, “Traditions from the Land of Israel and their route to Babylonia” (Hebrew), *Cathedra*, 92 (1999), 7–48
- Rosner, Fred, *Medicine in the Bible and the Talmud: Selections from Classical Jewish Sources* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1977)
- Ross, Barry, “Notes on some Jewish amulets, ‘*ayin ha-ra*’ and the priestly blessing,” *Journal of the Association of Graduates in Near Eastern Studies*, 2 (1991), 34–40
- Rotem, Tamar, “Under the cover of ‘Mother Taliban,’” *Haaretz*, November 25, 2011 (www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/1.1575288)
- Rousselle, Aline, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, trans. Felicia Pheasant (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988)
- Rowson, Everett K., “The categorization of gender and sexual irregularity in medieval Arabic vice lists,” in Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (eds.), *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 50–79
- Rubenstein, Jeffrey L., *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999)
- The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003)
- “Introduction,” in Jeffrey Rubenstein (ed.), *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 1–21
- “Social and institutional settings of rabbinic literature,” in Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 58–74
- Stories of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010)
- Runia, David T., “*Verba philonica, agalmatophorein* and the authenticity of the *De resurrectione* attributed to Athenagoras,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, 46 (1992), 313–27
- Russell, Amy, “Aemilius Paullus sees Greece: travel, vision and power in Polybius,” in Christopher Smith and Liv Maria Yarrow (eds.), *Imperialism, Cultural Politics, and Polybius* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 152–67
- Russell, Gül, “Greek medicine in Persia,” in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982–), vol. x, fasc. 4, 342–57
- Rutherford, Ian, “Theoria and Darsan: pilgrimage and vision in Greece and India,” *Classical Quarterly*, 50/1 (2000), 133–46
- “Tourism and the sacred: Pausanias and the traditions of Greek pilgrimage,” in S. E. Alcock, J. F. Cherry and J. Elsner (eds.), *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 40–52
- Sabra, A. I., *Optics, Astronomy and Logic: Studies in Arabic Science and Philosophy* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994)

- Sadan, Dov, "On the substitution of expressions of facing as an expression of seeing" (Hebrew), *Sinai*, 88/3–4 (1981), 184–91
- Saliou, Catherine, "The Byzantine house (400–912), rules and representations," in Michael Grünbart, Ewald Kislinger, and Anna Muthesius (eds.), *Material Culture and Well-being in Byzantium (400–1453): Proceedings of the International Conference (Cambridge, 8–10 September 2001)* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 199–206
- Sanders, Seth, "Old light on Moses' shining face," *Vetus Testamentum*, 52/3 (2002), 400–6
- Satlow, Michael L., "'Try to be a man': the rabbinic construction of masculinity," *Harvard Theological Review*, 89/1 (1996), 261–76
- "Jewish constructions of nakedness in late antiquity," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 116/3 (1997), 429–54
- Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Princeton University Press, 2001)
- "Rabbinic views on marriage, sexuality, and the family," in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. IV: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 612–26
- "Beyond influence: toward a new historiographic paradigm," in Anita Norich and Yaron Z. Eliav (eds.), *Jewish Literatures and Cultures: Context and Intertext* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2008), 37–53
- Schäfer, Peter, *Judeophobia: Attitudes Towards the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997)
- "Jews and gentiles in Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah," in Peter Schäfer (ed.), *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, vol. III (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 335–52
- "Research into rabbinic literature: an attempt to define the *status quaestionis*," in Martin Goodman and Philip Alexander (eds.), *Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late-Roman Palestine* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 51–65
- The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton University Press, 2011)
- (ed.), *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981)
- (ed.), *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984)
- Schaff, Philip (ed.), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, first series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1886–1900)
- Schaff, Philip and Henry Wace (eds.), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, second series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1886–1900)
- Schiffman, Lawrence H., *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1991)
- Schlutz, Alexander M., *Mind's World: Imagination and Subjectivity from Descartes to Romanticism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009)
- Schmidt, Francis, "Between Jews and Greeks: the Indian model," in H. Goodman (ed.), *Between Jerusalem and Benares: Comparative Studies in Judaism and Hinduism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 41–53

- Schofer, Jonathan, "Self, subject and chosen subjection: rabbinic ethics and comparative possibilities," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 33/2 (2005), 255–91
- Confronting Vulnerability: The Body and the Divine in Rabbinic Ethics* (University of Chicago Press, 2010)
- Scholem, Gershom, "Hakkarat Panim and Sidre Sirtutin" (Hebrew), in M. D. Kassuto, Yosef Klosner, and Yehoshua Guttman (eds.), *Sefer Asaf: A Collection of Research Articles* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1943), 459–95
- Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960)
- Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961)
- "Ein Fragment zur Physiognomik und Chiromantik aus der Tradition der spätantiken jüdischen Esoterik," in G. Widengren (ed.), *Liber Amicorum: Studies in Honor of C.J. Bleeker* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 175–93
- Schopen, Gregory, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and the Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997)
- Schremer, Adiel, "'He posed him a difficulty and placed him': a study in the evolution of the text of *b. Bava Qamma* 117a" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, 66 (1997), 403–15
- Male and Female He Created Them: Jewish Marriage in the Late Second Temple, Mishnah and Talmud* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2003)
- Schroeder, Caroline T., *Monastic Bodies: Discipline and Salvation in Shenoute of Atripe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007)
- "Queer eye for the ascetic guy? Homoeroticism, children, and the making of monks in late antique Egypt," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 77/2 (June 2009), 333–47
- Schwartz, Daniel R., "Viewing the holy utensils (P. Ox V, 840)," *New Testament Studies*, 32/1 (1986), 153–59
- Schwartz, Seth, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton University Press, 2001)
- "The rabbi in Aphrodite's bath: Palestinian society and Jewish identity in the high Roman Empire," in Simon Goldhill (ed.), *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 335–61
- "Political, social and economic life in the Land of Israel, 66–c. 235," in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. iv: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 23–52
- "The political geography of rabbinic texts," in Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 75–96
- "No dialogue at the symposium? Conviviality in Ben Sira and the Palestinian Talmud," in Simon Goldhill (ed.), *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 193–216
- Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society?: Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton University Press, 2010)

- Scott, James C., *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990)
- Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998)
- Scurlock, JoAnn and Burton R. Andersen, *Diagnoses in Assyrian and Babylonian Medicine: Ancient Sources, Translations and Modern Medical Analyses* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005)
- Secunda, Shai, “‘Dashtana– ~ki derekh nashim li’: a study of the Babylonian rabbinic laws of menstruation in relation to corresponding Zoroastrian texts,” Ph.D. dissertation, Yeshiva University, 2007.
- “Talmudic text and Iranian context: on the development of two Talmudic narratives,” *AJS Review*, 33 (2008), 45–69
- Selin, Helaine, *Encyclopaedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, 4 vols., 2nd edn. (Dordrecht: Springer-Verlag, 2008)
- Selz, Gebhard J., “Remarks on the empirical nature of early Mesopotamian knowledge acquisition,” in Gebhard J. Selz and Klaus Wagensohn (eds.), *The Empirical Dimension of Ancient Near Eastern Studies* (Berlin: Lit, 2010), 49–70
- Shahbazi, A. Shapur and Lutz Richter-Bernburg, “Gondēšāpur,” in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2002), vol. XI, fasc. 2, 131–35
- Shaked, Shaul, “The notions mēnōg and gētīg in the Pahlavi texts and their relation to eschatology,” *Acta Orientalia*, 33 (1971), 59–107
- “Gētīg and mēnōg (the material and spiritual worlds),” in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982–), vol. x, fasc. 6, 574–76
- Dualism in Transformation: Varieties of Religion in Sassanian Iran* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1994)
- “Some Islamic reports concerning Zoroastrianism,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 17 (1994), 43–84
- “The poetics of spells: language and structure in Aramaic incantations of late antiquity,” in Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn (eds.), *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (Groningen: Styx Publications, 1999), 173–96
- “Quests and visionary journeys in Sassanian Iran,” in Jan Assman and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 65–86
- “La ‘vision humaine’ selon les livres pehlevi,” *Studia Asiatica*, 11/1–2 (2010), 105–17
- “No talking during the meal: Zoroastrian themes in the Babylonian Talmud,” in Carol Bakhtos and Rahim Shayegan (eds.), *The Talmud in its Iranian Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 161–77
- Shaki, Mansour, “Dādestān ī dēnīg,” in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1993), 550–54

- "Greek influence on Persian thought," in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2002), vol. XI, fasc. 3, pp. 321–26
- Shapira, Dan, "Zoroastrian sources on black people," *Arabica*, 49 (2002), 117–22
- Sharma, Sunil and Anne-Marie Hilsdon, "Love: pre-modern discourses," in Suad Joseph and Afsaneh Najmabadi (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Body, Sexuality and Health* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 236–42
- Shaw, Brent, "Body/power/identity: passions of the martyrs," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 4 (1996), 269–312
- Shaw, Teresa M., "Askesis and the appearance of holiness," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 6 (1998), 485–99
- Shemesh, Aharon, "'The holy angels are in their council': the exclusion of deformed persons from holy places in Qumranic and rabbinic literature," *Dead Sea Discoveries*, 4/2 (1997), 178–206
- Shepardson, Christine C., *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem's Hymns in Fourth-Century Syria* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008)
- Shneer, David, *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War, and the Holocaust* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011)
- Sick, David H., "Mit(h)ra(s) and the myths of the sun," *Numen*, 51/4 (2004), 432–67
- Siegel, R. E., *Galen on Sense Perception: His Doctrines, Observations and Experiments on Vision, Hearing, Smell, Taste, Touch and Pain, and Their Historical Sources* (Basel: S. Karger, 1970)
- Silver, Larry, "Review of Robert S. Nelson, *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*," *CAA Reviews*, August 3, 2000 (www.caareviews.org/150)
- Silverman, Kaja, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York: Routledge, 1996)
- Simon, Gérard, *Le regard, l'être et l'apparance dans l'optique de l'antiquité* (Paris: Seuil, 1988)
- Archéologie de la vision, l'optique, le corps, la peinture* (Paris, Seuil, 2003)
- Sivertsev, Alexei, *Households, Sects, and the Origins of Rabbinic Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2005)
- Ska, Jean-Louis, "Vision and meal in Exodus 24:11," in *The Exegesis of the Pentateuch: Exegetical Studies and Basic Questions* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 165–83
- Skjærvø, P. Oktor, *The Spirit of Zoroastrianism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011).
- "Zoroastrian dualism," in Armin Lange, Eric M. Meyers, and Benno Peters (eds.), *Light Against Darkness: Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 55–91
- Smith, Andrew, *Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2004)
- Smith, Jonathan Z., *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1978)
- "In comparison a magic dwells," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (University of Chicago Press, 1982), 19–35

- To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (University of Chicago Press, 1987)
- Smith, Linda B., "From fragments to geometric shape: changes in visual object recognition between 18 and 24 months," *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 18/5 (2009), 290–94
- Smith, Mark M., *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001)
- Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008)
- Smith, Mark S., "Seeing God" in the Psalms: the background to the beatific vision in the Hebrew Bible," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 50 (1988), 171–83
- "The Near Eastern background of solar language for Yahweh," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 109/1 (1990), 29–39
- "The Psalms as a book for pilgrims," *Interpretation*, 46 (1992), 156–66
- Smith, Roland R., "The use of images: visual history and ancient history," in T. P. Wiseman (ed.), *Classics in Progress: Essays on Ancient Greece and Rome* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 59–102
- Sobchack, Vivian, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, 2nd edn. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007)
- Sokoloff, Michael, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002)
- A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002)
- Solinus, *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium*, ed. Theodore Mommsen (Berlin: Weidemann, 1895)
- Soranus, *Soranus' Gynecology*, trans. Owsei Temkin (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991)
- Soudavar, Abolala, *The Aura of Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2003)
- "The significance of Av. *či9ra*, OPers. *čiça*, MPers. *čih*r, and NPers. *čehr*, for the Iranian Cosmogony of Light," *Iranica Antiqua*, 41 (2006), 151–85
- Sperber, Daniel, "On the unfortunate adventures of Rav Kahana: a passage of Saboraic polemic from Sasanian Persia," in Shaul Shaked (ed.), *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1982–2008), vol. 1, 83–100
- The City in Roman Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)
- "Pesikta Rabbati," in M. Berenbaum and F. Skolnik (eds.), *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 16 vols., 2nd edn. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), vol. 11, 12–13
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, "Can the subaltern speak?" in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 271–313
- Sprachman, Paul, "*Le beau garçon sans merci*: the homoerotic tale in Arabic and Persian," in J. W. Wright, Jr. and Everett K. Rowson (eds.), *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 192–209

- Stausberg, Michael, "Contextualizing the contexts: on the study of Zoroastrian rituals," in Michael Stausberg (ed.), *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1–56
- Stehle, Eva, "Sappho's gaze: fantasies of a goddess and a young man," in Ellen Greene (ed.), *Reading Sappho: Contemporary Approaches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 193–225
- Stein, Dina, "Believing is seeing: *Bava Batra* 73a-75b" (Hebrew), *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature*, 17 (1999), 9–32
- "A maidservant and her master's voice: discourse, identity, and eros in rabbinic texts," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 10/3–4 (2001), 375–97
- Steiner, Deborah Tarn, *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton University Press, 2002)
- Stemberger, Günter, "Narrative baraitot in the Yerushalmi," in Peter Schäfer (ed.), *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Greco-Roman Culture*, vol. 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 63–81
- "Dating rabbinic traditions," in Reimund Bieringer, Florentino García Martínez, Didier Pollefeyt, and Peter J. Tomson (eds.), *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 79–96
- Stern, David, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991)
- "The captive woman: Hellenization, Greco-Roman erotic narrative, and rabbinic literature," *Poetics Today*, 19/1 (1998), 91–127
- "Midrash," in Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (eds.), *20th Century Jewish Religious Thought: Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements, and Beliefs* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2009), 613–20
- Stern, Karen B., "Mapping devotion in Roman Dura Europos: a reconsideration of the synagogue ceiling," *American Journal of Archaeology*, 114/3 (2010), 473–504
- Stern, Menahem, ed. and trans., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974)
- Stewart, Andrew, *Art, Desire, and the Body in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- Stökl-Ben Ezra, Daniel, "Parody and polemics on Pentecost: Talmud Yerushalmi *Pesahim* on Acts 2?" in Albert Gerhards and Clemens Leonhard (eds.), *Jewish and Christian Liturgy and Worship: New Insights into History and Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 279–93
- Stol, Marten, "Diagnosis and therapy in Babylonian medicine," *Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux*, 32 (1991), 42–65
- Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting*, with a chapter by F. A. M. Wiggermann (Leiden: Brill, 2007)
- Stoller, Paul, *The Taste of Ethnographic Things: The Senses in Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989)
- Strack, H. L. and Gunther Stemberger, *Introduction to Talmud and Midrash*, trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996)
- Stroumsa, Guy G., *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2005)

- "To see or not to see: on the early history of the *visio beatifica*," in Peter Schäfer (ed.), *Wege mystischer Gotteserfahrung / Mystical Approaches to God* (Oldenburg: Historisches Kolleg München, 2006), 67–80
- Strozier, Robert M., *Foucault, Subjectivity, and Identity: Historical Constructions of Subject and Self* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 2002)
- Struthers, William M., *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2010)
- Subbarayappa, B. V., "The physical world: views and concepts," in D. M. Bose, S. N. Sen, and B. V. Subbarayappa (eds.), *A Concise History of Science in India* (New Delhi: Indian National Science Academy, 1971), 445–83
- The Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest nā-šāyest*, ed. M. P. Firoze Kotwal (København: Munksgaard, 1969)
- Sussman, Yaakov, "The history of the halakhah and the Dead Sea Scrolls" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, 59/1–2 (1990), 11–76
- Sutherland, Elizabeth H., "How (not) to look at a woman: bodily encounters and the failure of the gaze in Horace's C. 1.19," *American Journal of Philology*, 124/1 (2003): 57–80
- Swartz, Michael D., *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton University Press, 1996)
- "Jewish visionary tradition and rabbinic literature," in Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 198–221
- Swartz, Michael D. and Joseph Yahalom (eds.), *Avodah: An Anthology of Ancient Poetry for Yom Kippur* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005)
- Ta-Shma, Israel M., "One who is blind in one eye is exempt from the *Re'iyah*: an unclear Tannaitic exegesis and its explanation" (Hebrew), *Bar Ilan*, 30–31 (2006), 591–96
- Tacitus, *Tacitus III: Histories 4–5 and Annals 1–3*, trans. C. H. Moore, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931)
- Teppler, Yaakov Y., *Birkat haMinim: Jews and Christians in Conflict in the Ancient World*, trans. Susan Weingarten (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007)
- Terrien, Samuel, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003)
- Tertullian, *Disiplinary, Moral, and Ascetical Works*, trans. Rudolph Arbesmann, Sister Emily Joseph Daly, and Edwin Quain (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1959)
- Thomson, Marie Louise, "The evil eye in Mesopotamia," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 51 (1992), 19–32
- Tibat Marqe: A Collection of Samaritan Midrashim* (Hebrew), ed. and trans. Ze'ev Ben-Hayyim (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1988)
- Tigay, Jeffrey H., "'He begot a son in his likeness after his image' (Genesis 5:3)," in Mordechai Cohen, Barry L. Eichler, and Jeffrey H. Tigay (eds.), *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 139–47

- Tropper, Amram, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography: Tractate Avot in the Context of the Graeco-Roman Near East* (Oxford University Press, 2004)
- Turan, Sinai, "'Wherever the sages set their eyes, there is either death or poverty': on the history, terminology and imagery of the Talmudic traditions about the devastating gaze of the sages" (Hebrew), *Sidra*, 23 (2008), 137–205
- Uehlinger, Christoph, "Anthropomorphic cult statuary in iron age Palestine and the search for Yahweh's cult images," in Karel van der Toorn (ed.), *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1997), 97–155
- Ulmer, Rivka, *The Evil Eye in the Bible and in Rabbinic Literature* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1994)
- Urbach, Ephraim, "The tradition about *Torat Ha-Sod* in the Tannaitic Period" (Hebrew), in Ephraim Urbach, R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, Chaim Wirszubski, and Gershom Scholem (eds.), *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem on His Seventieth Birthday by Pupils, Colleagues, and Friends* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 2–11.
- van der Toorn, Karel, "The iconic book analogies between the Babylonian cult of images and the veneration of the Torah," in Karel van der Toorn (ed.), *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1997), 229–48
- Varner, Eric R., *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (Leiden: Brill, 2004)
- Veltri, Giuseppe, "From the best text to the pragmatic edition: on editing rabbinic texts," in Reimund Bieringer, Florentino García Martínez, Didier Pollefeyt, and Peter J. Tomson (eds.), *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 63–78
- Veri, M., "Homophobic discourse surrounding the female athlete," *Quest*, 52/4 (1999), 255–68
- Veri, M., Robyn Wiegman, and Lynda Zwinger, "Tonya's bad boot, or go figure," in Cynthia Baughman (ed.), *Women on Ice: Feminist Essays on the Tonya Harding/Nancy Kerrigan Spectacle* (New York: Routledge Press, 1995), 103–21
- Vermeule, Cornelius, *Jewish Relations with the Art of Ancient Greece and Rome ("Judea Capta Sed Non Devicta")* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1981)
- Vernant, Jean-Pierre, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, ed. Froma Zeitlin (Princeton University Press, 1992)
- Vessey, Mark, "The demise of the Christian writer and the remaking of 'late antiquity': from H. I. Marrou's *Saint Augustine* (1938) to Peter Brown's *Holy Man* (1983)," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 6/3 (1998), 377–411
- Visotzky, Burton L., "Three Syriac cruxes," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 42/2 (1991), 167–75
- Vogel, Wolfgang H. and Andreas Berke, *Brief History of Vision and Ocular Medicine* (Amsterdam: Wayenborgh Publishers, 2009)
- Vööbus, Arthur (ed. and trans.), *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, 4 vols, 401–402, 407–408 (Louvain: Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1979)

- Wade, Nicholas J., "Light and sight since antiquity," *Perception* 27 (1998), 637–70
A Natural History of Vision (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998)
- Wade, Nicholas J. and Michael Swanson, *Visual Perception: An Introduction* (Hove: Psychology Press, 2001)
- Walden, Elizabeth, "Vision, touch and feminist epistemology," *Tessera*, 32 (Summer 2002), 118–25
- Walker, Joel, "Against the eternity of the stars: disputation and Christian philosophy in late Sassanian Mesopotamia," in G. Gnoli and A. Panaino (eds.), *La Persia e Bizanzio* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2004), 518–35
The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006)
- Wallis, Richard T., *Neoplatonism* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1995)
- Walls, Neal H., *Desire, Discord, and Death: Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Myth* (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2001)
- Wartofsky, Marx W., "Picturing and representing," in Dennis F. Fischer and Calvin F. Nodine (eds.), *Perception and Pictorial Representation* (New York: Praeger, 1979), 272–83
- Wharton, Annabel Jane, "Good and bad images from the synagogue of Dura Europos: contexts, subtexts, intertexts," in Eva R. Hoffman (ed.), *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 19–39
- Webb, Ruth, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009)
- Weinfeld, Moshe, "The decalogue, its significance, uniqueness, and place in Israel's tradition," in Edwin Brown Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John Woodland Welch (eds.), *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 3–48
- Werman, Cana, "CD XI:17: apart from your Sabbaths," in Joseph M. Baumgarten, Esther G. Chazon, and Avital Pinnick (eds.), *The Damascus Document: A Centennial of Discovery* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 201–12
- Wheatley, Edward, *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind: Medieval Constructions of a Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010)
- White, David G. *Sinister Yogis* (University of Chicago Press, 2009)
 "Netra Tantra at the crossroads of the demonological Cosmopolis," *Journal of Hindu Studies* 5/2 (2012): 145–71
- Wilken, Robert L., *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994)
- Willemen, Paul, "Voyeurism, the look, and Dwoskin," in Philip Rosen (ed.), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 210–18
- Williams, Craig A., "Pudicitia and pueri: Roman concepts of male sexual experience," in Martin Duberman (ed.), *Queer Representations: Reading Lives, Reading Cultures* (New York University Press, 1997), 25–38
Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity (Oxford University Press, 1999)

- Williamson, Margaret, "Sappho and the other woman," in Ellen Greene (ed.), *Reading Sappho: Contemporary Approaches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 248–64
- Wills, Lawrence, "Ascetic theology before asceticism? Jewish narratives and the decentering of the self," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 74/4 (2006), 902–25
- Winter, Irene J., "Sex, rhetoric, and the public monument: the alluring body of Naram-Sin of Agade," in N. B. Kampen (ed.), *Sexuality in Ancient Art* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11–26
- Wisdom of the Sassanian Sages (Denkard VI)*, ed. and trans. Shaul Shaked (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979)
- Wolfson, Elliot R., "Circumcision, vision of God, and textual interpretation: from midrashic trope to mystical symbol," *History of Religions*, 27 (1987), 189–215.
- "Images of God's feet: some observations on the divine body in Judaism," in Howard Eilberg-Schwartz (ed.), *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 143–81
- "Iconic visualization and the imaginal body of God: the role of intention in the rabbinic conception of prayer," *Modern Theology*, 12 (1996), 137–62
- Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton University Press, 1997)
- Wolfson, Harry A., *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947; repr. 1970)
- Xenophon, *Symposium*, in *Xenophon in Seven Volumes*, vol. iv: *Memorabilia: Oeconomicus. Symposium. Apology*, trans. E. C. Marchant and O. J. Todd, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969–1980)
- Xenophon of Ephesus, "The Ephesian tale," trans. Graham Anderson, in B. P. Reardon (ed.), *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 125–69
- 'Xusrōv et Rētak: The Pahlavi Text, "King Husrav and His Boy", ed. Jamshedji Maneckji Unvala (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1921)
- Yadin, Azzan, *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)
- "Rabban Gamliel, Aphrodite's bath, and the question of pagan monotheism," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 96/2 (2006), 149–79
- Yadin, Yigael, *The Temple Scroll*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983)
- Young, Dwight W., "Five leaves from a copy of Shenute's Third Canon," *Muséon*, 113 (2000), 263–97
- Zacharias of Sakha, *The Holy Workshop of Virtue: The Life of John the Little*, ed. Maged S. A. Mikhail and Tim Vivian, trans. Rowan A. Greer (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2010)
- Zaehner, R. C., *Zurvan: A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995)

- Zand-Akāsīh, Iranian or Greater Bundahishn*, transcribed and trans. B. T. Anklesaria (Bombay: Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha, 1956)
- Zellentin, Holger M., *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011)
- Zulay, Menahem, “New poems of Rabbi Ḥaduta” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, 22 (1951), 28–42

Index of ancient sources

- Achilles Tatius
Leucippe and Clitophon
 1.4.2–3, 30
 5.13.4, 30n55
 6, 30, 143
 7, 30n56
- Apostolic Constitutions*
 1.2, 148
- Aristotle
De Anima
 427b14, 19n6
De Memoria
 449b31–450a1, 19n6
- Augustine
Enarrationes in Psalmos
 56, 67
Sermones
 178, 63
- Babylonian Talmud
Berakhot
 5b, 161n201
 6a, 37n97
 20a, 149, 160n198, 164
 24a, 118–23, 130
 25b, 125–27
 32b–33a, 227n112
 43b, 260
 55a, 222n93
 57b, 194
 58b, 242, 249n191, 250n195
 61a, 130
 62b, 138n98
Shabbat
 53b, 140
 62b, 152
 64a–b, 121
 77b, 259
 108b–109a, 259
 113b, 260
 118b, 137n90, 139
- 145a, 217
 149a, 195
- 'Eruvin*
 13b, 208–11, 217, 242, 249n190
 57b, 129
- Pesahim*
 110b, 37n97
 113a–b, 141–42, 143, 144, 145
- Yoma*
 21b, 87–88, 90n40, 90n41
 47a, 137
 53a, 243, 244
 54a, 108
 54a–b, 96, 103, 104
 72b, 221n87
 74b, 123
- Sukkah*
 27b, 79, 211
 51b, 83
- Rosh Hashanah*
 16b, 79
 24b, 196
- Ta'anit*
 7a–b, 223n99
 10b, 260
 21b, 140
 23a, 210n36
 24a, 139n100
- Megillah*
 28a, 259
- Mo'ed Qatan*
 25b, 159
- Ḥagigah*
 2a, 53, 61, 107
 2b, 79
 3a–b, 78
 4b, 53, 56n66, 61, 107
 4b–5a, 60, 61
 5a, 79, 242
 5a–b, 56n66, 61, 67, 108
 5b, 69–73, 78, 79, 99, 211, 246

Babylonian Talmud (*cont.*)

11a–16a, 56n66
 12b, 99
 14b, 76
 15a, 75n138, 78, 231n129
 15b, 78
 16a, 77, 259
 26b, 56n66, 87–88, 90n41, 104,
 107

Yevamot

96b–97a, 186n82, 231, 244n177
 97a, 214

Ketubot

17a, 224
 60b, 259
 61b, 235n147
 65a, 165n223
 103b, 227

Nedarim

20a–b, 131–33, 154
 49b, 222n93

Sotah

8a, 123n34
 30b–31a, 44
 36b, 149, 165n224

Gittin

57b–58a, 153, 157

Qiddushin

33a–b, 235n147, 239–42

Bava Metsi'a

58b–59a, 254
 84a, 251n199, 255
 84a–b, 159–67, 202
 84b, 249n190

Bava Batra

4a, 84
 16a, 140
 58a, 159n197, 251n199
 73b–74a, 23n19

Sanhedrin

4a, 53
 14a, 221n89, 224
 39b, 156
 45a, 123n34
 90b, 214
 92b, 156, 157
 103b, 196n121

Makkot

24a, 129, 227

'Avodah Zarah

12b, 259
 18a, 153
 20a, 114, 166n227
 20a–b, 131
 20b, 37n97

28b, 259

29a, 259

43b, 196

Horayot

12a, 217

Zevahim

118b, 164

Menahot

29a, 87–88, 90n41

29b, 209n32

43b, 126

98a–b, 90n43

Ḥullin

59b–60a, 41

137b, 218, 223n99

Bekhorot

31b, 214

'Arakhin

2b, 53

Keritot

6a, 217

Niddah

23a, 259

Bundahisn

14:28, 123n35

14b, 155n179, 156n185

26:1–6, 165n223, 250n193

Clement of Alexandria

Paedagogus

3.11, 148, 181

Dēnkard

iv.22, 250

vi.223–24, 38, 250n196

Diogenes Laertius

Vitae Philosophorum

1.6–9, 105

Ecclesiastes Rabbah

8:1, 222n93

Eusebius

Historia Ecclesiastica

4.6, 67n108

Theophania

1.18, 67n108

4.20, 67n108

4.3, 67n108

Galen

De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis

v.4.1.2, 28n41

De Theriaca ad Pisonem

9, 155

Genesis Rabbah

- 2:4 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, I:17–18), 75n138
 26:7 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, I:254), 155
 38:13 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, I:360–64), 188n93
 65:10 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, II:719–20), 44
 87:3 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1063), 150
 87:7 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1072–73), 149
 87:10 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1075–76), 150
 97:4 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1224), 149, 164
 98:18 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1268–69), 149
 98:20 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, III:1270), 149

Hebrew Bible

Genesis

- 1:2, 75
 1:27, 215
 6:4, 155
 6:9, 215
 9:23, 126
 12:11, 140
 39:6, 148
 39:7, 149
 48:16, 160
 49:22, 160, 163, 164

Exodus

- 2:12, 175n27
 16:10, 175n27
 19:11, 212
 20:4, 1
 20:7, 1
 20:20, 187, 237
 23:14, 86
 23:14–17, 44, 46
 23:17, 51n45, 79
 24:5, 48
 24:9, 208
 24:9–11, 48
 24:14, 54
 25:10, 221n87
 25:18–20, 90
 25:22, 90
 25:23–30, 84
 33:8, 233, 234, 236, 241n167
 33:20, 208, 229
 33:22–23, 68n114
 33:23, 229
 34:23, 44, 48, 50, 85

Leviticus

- 16:2, 84
 19:4, 174, 181, 183, 195
 19:31, 175n26
 19:32, 187, 233, 239
 20:6, 175n26, 175n27
 21:18–20, 50, 52n48, 188n92
 22:21–24, 52n48

24:6, 88

Numbers

- 1:51, 84
 3:3–10, 84
 4:19–20, 84
 4:20, 91
 11:16, 239
 12:6–8, 62, 64–65, 66n106
 12:10, 175n27
 15:39, 132
 16:15, 175n27
 31:50, 121

Deuteronomy

- 4:9, 253
 9:27, 175n27
 12:3, 197
 12:5–6, 49
 13:18, 197
 16:11, 46
 16:16, 44, 51
 23:9, 130
 28:10, 225, 230
 31:11, 46
 31:12, 56, 59
 31:14, 79
 31:17, 62, 65

1 Samuel

- 1:22, 49, 184n67
 16:12, 215
 21:7, 88

2 Samuel

- 5:8, 49
 6:20, 138n98

1 Kings

- 6:23–28, 90
 7:30, 91n44
 7:36, 91n44
 8:8, 90, 92

Isaiah

- 1:12, 60
 3:16, 152
 30:20, 209, 217
 33:13, 67n109
 33:15, 67n109
 33:17, 77
 47:2, 119
 47:3, 119
 51:16, 62, 65
 52:1, 49
 61:9, 219

Jeremiah

- 3:9, 119
 51:51, 98

Ezekiel

- 1, 74

Hebrew Bible (*cont.*)

23:20, 126

25:8, 98

Habakkuk

2:19, 187, 237, 238

2:20, 237, 239

Psalms

37:34, 181, 183

39:6, 215

39:7, 213, 215

42:2, 41

42:2–3, 82

49:10, 72

49:10–11, 70

49:11, 72

69:24, 1

97:7, 190n99

135:16–17, 16

Job

19:27, 217

29:8, 187

Proverbs

20:6, 214

31:3, 162

8:22, 239

Song of Songs

1:13, 90

2:14, 119

4:1, 119

6:4, 126

Ecclesiastes

8:1, 222

Lamentations

1:8, 91, 93, 104

1:10, 98

4:2, 154, 156

Hippolytus

Refutatio Omnium Haeresium

9.26.1–2, 177

Jerome

Epistulae

108.14, 202

Joseph and Aseneth

23:1–2, 31

Josephus

Antiquitates Judaicae

14.71–72, 84

Bellum Judaicum

1.152–53, 84

5.219, 101n79

Contra Apionem

2.82–83, 101n79

Julian

Oration on the Mother of the Gods

294c–d, 55, 178

Justin Martyr

Dialogus cum Tryphone

114, 100

*Lamentations Rabbah**Petiḥta* (Proem) 9 (ed. Buber, 4b), 91n44,

97–100, 108

1:11 (ed. Buber, 38a), 219

1:16 (ed. Buber, 41a–b), 153

Leviticus Rabbah

16:1 (ed. Margalio, 1:341–44), 152

23:12 (ed. Margalio, 11:545), 120

23:13 (ed. Margalio, 11:548), 128

24:6 (ed. Margalio, 11:559–60), 139

31:8 (ed. Margalio, 11:727–28), 259

*Mekhilta Derabbi Yishma'el**Pasha* 17 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 68), 51n47*Shirta* 1 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 121), 44*Bahodesh* 2 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 207), 44*Bahodesh* 2 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 210–11), 213*Bahodesh* 9 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 235), 52, 213*Kaspa* 20 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 333), 46

Mishnah

Berakhot

5:1, 225

9:1, 191, 192, 193, 242

9:1–2, 8–9, 23, 191

Pe'ah

1:1, 58

Ḥallah

2:3, 118, 119, 123

Bikkurim

3:3, 231

Sheqalim

8:4, 83

Sukkah

5:1, 83

Ḥagigah

1:1, 46, 51n47, 56

1:1–12, 45–46

1:2, 46, 47, 58

2:1, 47, 74, 76

3:8, 50, 86

Qiddushin

1:7, 239

ʿAvodah Zarah

3:1, 198

3:4, 197–98

Avot

3:9, 253

3:9–10, 212

3:10, 253

Menahot

9:8, 52n48

11:4, 84n14

- Bekhorot*
6, 52n48
7, 52n48, 188n92
- Middot*
4:5, 84
- Kelim*
1:8–9, 49n37, 50, 52n48
- New Testament
Matthew
5:28, 120
Acts
17:16, 170
Romans
11:10, 1
2 Corinthians
3:14–16, 66n106
3:18, 66
- Palestinian Talmud
Berakhot
2:1, 4b, 186n82, 214, 231, 244n177, 247
2:2(3), 4c, 57
5:1, 9a, 224–30, 238
6:1, 9a, 247
9:1, 13b, 193
9:1, 13b–c, 114
9:2, 13d, 188n93
9:5, 14d, 126
Pe'ah
1:1, 15a, 58
8:9, 21b, 70n123, 73
Kil'ayim
9:4, 32b, 231
Hallah
2:3, 58c, 118, 119, 122
2:4, 58c, 184
Bikkurim
3:3, 65c–d, 187, 225, 231–39, 241
Shabbat
1:2, 3a, 213–15
8:1, 11a, 222
'Eruvin
5:1, 22b, 211–12
10:1, 26a, 57
Pesahim
10:1, 37c, 222, 247
Sheqalim
2:5, 47a, 186n82
2:6, 47a, 231
3:2, 47c, 222n93
5:5, 49b, 70n123
6:1, 49c, 90n43
6:4, 50a, 87–88
Yoma
1:1, 38d, 137
- Sukkah*
5:4, 55c, 138n98
- Betsah*
5:2, 63a, 205–11, 213, 229, 242, 247,
249n190
- Ta'anit*
3:8, 66d, 210n36
- Megillah*
1:10, 72b, 127, 183
3:1, 74a, 127
- Mo'ed Qatan*
3:1, 81d, 211
3:7, 83c, 186, 214, 231, 238, 244n177
- Hagigah*
1:1, 75b, 56
1:1, 76a, 85–87, 88
1:1, 76b, 56, 58
2:1, 77a–b, 75n138, 76
3:8, 79d, 85, 87–88
- Yevamot*
2:4, 3d, 139
- Ketubot*
12:3, 35a, 231, 249
- Qiddushin*
1:7, 61a, 213–15
- Sanhedrin*
2:3, 20b, 138n98
10:2, 29b, 139
10:3, 29c, 127
11:4, 30b, 211–12
11:5, 30b, 188n93
- 'Avodah Zarah*
1:8, 40a–b, 114
3:1, 42b–c, 139, 139n100, 159, 181–84, 189,
251n199
3:8, 43b, 186, 189, 194
4:7, 44a, 190n99
- Horayot*
2:5, 46d, 149
- Pesiqta Derav Kahana*
12:25 (ed. Mandelbaum, 1:224), 59
19 (ed. Mandelbaum, 1:301), 91n43
- Pesiqta Rabbati*
1 (ed. Friedmann, 1a), 41
22 (ed. Friedmann, 112b), 57
- Philo
Legatio ad Gaium
31.210–12, 179
31.224, 179
31.237–38, 179
- Plato
Timaeus
45b–c, 28
- Pliny
Naturalis Historia
7.52, 134

*Sifra**Nedavah* 2 (ed. Weiss, 4a), 92n46, 108*Qedoshim* 1 (ed. Weiss, 87a), 174–77, 180*Qedoshim* 3 (ed. Weiss, 91a), 232n135*Sifre Deuteronomy*

36 (ed. Finkelstein, 68), 126

41 (ed. Finkelstein, 86–87), 232n135

143 (ed. Finkelstein, 195–96), 50–51, 54

343 (ed. Finkelstein, 399–400), 213, 221

Song of Songs Rabbah

1:19, 221

2:5, 188, 189

6:17, 219

Soranus

Gynaeciorum

1.39, 154

Sulpicius Severus

Dialogi

2.5, 227

Tacitus

Histories

5.3.4, 101

Tertullian

Adversus Iudaeos

13.4, 67n109

De Spectaculis

8.9, 170

13, 180

15.2–6, 185

19, 185n78

29–30, 185

30, 185

De Verginibus Velandis

1.12, 122

1.14, 121

Tosefta

Berakhot

6:2, 242

6:2–6, 9, 23, 191

6:4, 114, 192

6:25, 126

Shabbat

17:1, 174–77

Yoma

2:15, 90n43

Megillah

3:15, 241n166

3:24, 235n146, 240

Hagigah

1:1, 48–50, 54

1:2, 51n47

1:4, 47, 48n31

2:1, 74

2:3–4, 74

2:6, 74, 75

2:7, 74

Sanhedrin

7:8, 241n166, 241n167

‘Avodah Zarah

2:7, 185

Menahot

13:19, 83

‘Arakhin

2:1, 49n35, 50

Xenophon

Symposium

4.12, 30n54

Zacharias of Sakha

The Syriac Life of Abba John the Little

30, 138

Index of subjects

- adultery, 128, 130, 155, 163, 168, 181
- Adversus Judaeos* writings, 67, 100–01
- '*Am ha'arets*, 7
- Amoraim. *See* Rabbis
- aniconism, 2, 170–71, 172
- anthropomorphism, 16, 51, 55, 70, 80, 100, 102, 106, 165
- Aristotle, 28
- ark (*aron*), 90, 92–93, 211
- art. *See* Images
- art, history of, 19, 92
- asceticism, visual
 - and holiness, 139, 141–42, 183–84, 190
 - as a response to visual eros, 16, 116, 127–28, 135, 146, 154, 164, 168–69, 255
 - and the troubling of gender, 16, 96, 168, 255
- atomists, 28
- Augustine, 29, 63, 67
- autovisuality, 117, 118, 125, 126–28
- '*Avodah zarah*. *See* idolatry

- Bavli. *See* Talmud
- beauty, 30, 133
 - blessings over, 9, 114
 - and the feminine, 115, 130, 147–48, 160, 162–63, 165–67
 - male, 117, 147–51, 154, 155–58, 169, 190
 - and visual pleasure, 115, 147, 151, 181, 253
 - and youth, 156–57
 - See also* R. Yohanan, beauty of
- Berakhot*. *See* blessings
- Bible, Hebrew,
 - and idolatry, 174–77
 - See also* God, sightings of, in biblical texts; pilgrimage, in the Bible
- blessings, 69, 71, 73
 - seeing '*ervah* and, 118, 123, 124, 168
 - "vision" blessings, 8–10, 23, 114, 191–94, 242
 - See also* beauty, blessings over; prayer
- blinding, 78–79, 186, 187–90, 195
- blindness
 - exemption (or exclusion) from *re'iyat panim*, 50, 53, 54, 56, 60, 70
 - and iconoclasm, 186–90, 196, 200
 - Jewish, in Christian theology, 1, 24, 66–67, 107, 172
 - as punishment, 79, 132, 133
 - rabbinic attitudes toward, 69–73, 81, 145, 214
- body
 - female, 116, 118–25, 129–32, 139
 - of God, 54, 93
 - historicization of, 4
 - male, 116, 118, 129
 - of the pilgrim, 51–52, 54, 80, 84
 - rabbinic, 202, 234, 235–36, 245, 248
 - and sexual desire, 115, 117–23, 129–31, 133, 139
- Boyarin, Daniel, 23n22, 129, 163
- Brown, Peter, 203

- castration, 122, 133
- chariot, account of (*ma'ase hamerkavah*), 74, 76, 229
- cherubim
 - and concerns about idolatry, 101, 102, 111, 196
 - and pilgrimage display, 82, 90–91, 93, 94–95, 96–99, 111, 167
 - in sexual embrace, 90, 91, 94–95, 96–99, 167
- Christ, Jesus, 67, 107, 205
- Christianity
 - and accusations of Jewish idolatry, 16, 67
 - modesty in, 128–29
 - supersessionism, 63, 65–67, 80
 - See also* visuality, Christian
- circumcision, 126–28, 139, 184
- concealment. *See* cult objects, exposure and concealment of; exposure
- conception, theories of, 31, 135, 154–56, 168. *See also* Eugenics, visual
- cult objects
 - exposure and concealment of, 99, 104, 108
 - idolatrous aspects of, 82, 102, 104

- cult objects (*cont.*)
 as representations of the divine, 82–83, 84–87,
 90, 94, 96, 99, 101–02, 105, 111
- demons, 31, 31n64, 36, 37n97, 38, 38n102, 40,
 106, 229–30
- desire, erotic, 30, 36, 113–15, 142–43, 150, 156–57,
 167, 197, 256
 rabbinic anxiety about, 16, 82, 168–69
 domestic sphere, 133, 135, 137, 210
- ekphrasis*, 22, 110, 161, 165, 178, 202
 elder (*zaqen*), 211, 231–35, 239–42
 R. Ele'azar, 78, 186, 214, 240, 243
 R. Eli'ezer, 132, 133, 134–35, 154, 155
 Elsner, Jaś, 53, 104n89, 178, 200
 Emperor, Roman
 images of, 179–80, 183
 in rabbinic narrative, 41, 62, 65–66, 67–69,
 224, 226–29
 eros, visual. *See* desire, erotic
 'ervah (genital nakedness), 93, 130, 131–33, 137,
 139, 161, 168
 eugenics, visual, 31, 135, 137, 154–56, 161, 163, 168.
See also Conception, theories of
 evil eye, 10, 31, 38, 40, 64, 177, 189
 Joseph and, 149, 160, 163–65
 exposure
 of cult objects, 99, 108
 of the sage's body, 211, 229
 sexual, 93, 117–22, 132, 139
 eyes
 and reciprocal vision, 54
 and visual eros, 125, 142, 144, 149
 as phallus, 133
- face-bread (*lehem hapanim*)
 display of, 82, 88, 101, 104, 167
 and the face of God, 85
 theophanic function of, 88, 101, 167
 fantasy, 16, 39, 131n60, 134, 155
 femininity, 16, 117, 120–24, 129–31, 139, 255–56.
See also Gaze, female
 feminization
 of beautiful men, 153, 160–63, 165–67
 of God, 91–94, 103–04, 167
 of Jewish men, under the imperial gaze,
 151–58
 of male genitalia, 127
 of visually abstinent men, 16, 146
 film theory, 95–96, 122
 Fine, Steven, 86
 forensics, halakhic, 173. *See also* idols, rabbinic
 modes of viewing
 Frank, Georgia, 89, 187, 204, 251
- Gamaliel Rabban, 114, 130, 145, 147, 197–98,
 200–01
- gaze
 aversion of. *See* asceticism, visual
 concealing oneself from, 137–39
 erotic, 115, 120–35, 139, 140–46, 151, 156–57,
 256
 female, 36, 117, 134, 142, 143–46, 147, 155, 167,
 255
 gendered, 103–04, 120–35, 147, 151, 163,
 168–69
 of God, 51, 52, 59, 95, 127, 259
 imperial, 23, 147, 154, 155–58, 169, 199,
 226–29, 256–57
 lowering of, 30, 96, 141–46
 male, 117, 155
 masculine, 16, 93, 96, 103–04, 117, 120–35, 137,
 141, 167, 255–56
 penetrative, 95, 121, 140, 142, 143–44, 255
 reciprocal, 51, 53–55, 104, 142–43, 162–64
 storyteller's, 163–67
 transgressive, 78, 84, 142, 146, 155
See also rabbis, gaze of
- gender
 paradigms of, in rabbinic culture, 16, 92–96,
 103–04, 117, 122–29, 141, 146–49, 163,
 167, 168–69, 256
 troubling of, 16, 94, 96, 117, 141, 142, 144–46,
 158–69, 256
See also femininity; gaze, gendered; God,
 gendering of, in rabbinic sources;
 masculinity
- genitalia, 116–29, 131–33, 162, 168, 184
- gentiles
 gaze of, 147, 169. *See also* Gaze, imperial
 as visual objects, 114, 126, 130, 242
 violation of sacred space, 91, 93, 95, 99, 108,
 167
See also Emperor, Roman; officials, Roman;
 rabbis, and non-Jews
- gesture, as visual communication, 62, 65–66,
 67–68, 99
- God
 absence of, 60–63, 77, 108–12, 254
 body of, 100
 desire to see, 15, 41–43, 52, 60, 78, 105,
 109
 face of, 17, 45, 51, 60–73, 80, 82, 88, 101, 105,
 246
 gendering of, in rabbinic sources, 16, 91–94,
 103–04, 127, 167, 255
 images of, 1–2
 relationship with Israel, 93–95, 96, 99, 103
 sightings of, in biblical texts, 44, 48, 64, 108,
 229

- and Torah, 211, 213
 as "unseen seer," 69–73, 80, 145, 259
 visibility of, 2, 15, 41–45, 93, 217, 254
See also imago dei; re'iyah, seeing sages as a replacement for
- hagiography, 110, 141, 169, 228, 230, 239, 252, 256
- haptic vision. *See* vision, and touch ("haptic vision")
- Hekhalot* literature, 77, 106, 157n188
- heterosexuality, 116, 124, 127, 155, 167
- heterovisuality
 and heterosexuality, 116, 124, 127
 as a mode of viewing, 156, 259
 and *re'iyah*, 82, 102–04, 107, 109, 142, 167–68
- histakkelut*. *See* vision, rabbinic terminology for holiness
 physical presence of (*praesentia*), 204, 251
 rabbinic, 127–28, 139, 141–42, 169, 183, 186, 201
 and visual piety, 226, 234
See also asceticism, visual, and holiness
- holy man, 141, 223, 228, 234, 239, 247
- holy of holies, 84, 90, 92–93, 97–99, 112, 167, 243
 gentile speculation about, 100, 101, 107
- homoeoticism, 124–29, 147, 151, 155, 158–67, 169
- homovisuality
 as a mode of viewing, 54, 259
 and *re'iyah*, 43, 45, 54, 70–71, 72–73, 80, 102–04, 107, 109
 sexuality and, 127, 142, 143, 167
- honor, 70, 71, 136, 143–44, 229
- humor, 67, 145, 222, 241
- Ḥagigah*. *See* *Re'iyah*, and *Ḥagigah*
- iconoclasm, 172, 181–83, 186–90, 194, 196, 199–200
- icons
 Christian, 178, 251
 of God, 59, 60
 and idols, 176
 rabbis as, 17, 165, 187, 190, 202, 212–24
 in Babylonia, 204, 208–11, 239–47, 249–52
 in Palestine, 204, 205–08, 231–39, 241–47, 252
See images; R. Yohanan, as an icon
- idolatry, 1–2, 7, 16, 170–79, 246, 249
 Christian attitudes toward, 172, 180–81, 183, 184–86, 198–99
 Jewish propensity towards, in Christian theology, 101, 107, 172
 mental aspect of, 195, 196
 and reciprocal vision, 178–79, 189
 and sexual promiscuity, 171
 uprooting of, 9, 194, 200
See also aniconism; second commandment
- idols, 1–2, 16, 159, 170–71
 definition of, 197–201
 and "liturgical looking," 174, 191–96, 200, 201
 "looking away" from, 173–77, 186, 188, 192, 200
 as mediators of divine visibility, 170
 motif of Jewish rejection of, 170–71
 nonrabbinic officials as, 238–39
 as a rabbinic construction, 172–73, 180, 198–201
 rabbinic encounters with, 186–88, 189–90, 195–96, 197–98, 200–01
 rabbinic modes of viewing, 8, 16, 17, 171–201
 rabbinic negation of ("looking awry"), 173, 181–83, 186–88, 189–90, 196, 199–200
 ubiquity of, 170, 172, 184, 196, 200
 as visual objects, 170–86
 and women, 171, 172
- images
 ambiguity of, 200–01
 apotropaic, 189
 on coins, 85, 139, 151–52, 183
 of the commandments, 179–80
 as evidence for a history of vision, 22
 imperial, 55, 159, 179–80, 182, 183, 190
 as mediators of divine visibility, 55, 59, 60, 83, 103, 178–80
 motif of Jewish rejection of, 3, 172–73
 and sexuality, 149, 156
 and texts, as evidence for viewing habits, 171–72, 173, 176
 as visual objects, 22, 55, 149, 156, 196–97
- imago dei*, 52, 208, 215
- Imma Shalom, 132, 133, 134, 137, 154
- imperialism
 Christian, 27, 194n109, 199, 226, 248, 256
 Roman, 10, 16, 193
 and exploitation of Jewish subjects, 154
 impact of, 42, 255
 and masculinity, 151–53, 156–58
 and rabbinic authority, 69, 198, 224–30, 247–48
See also gaze, imperial
- impurity. *See* purity, ritual
- India, 32–35, 131n64
- Israel, land of, 141–42, 151, 193–94, 199, 204
- Jaffee, Martin, 221, 245
- Jay, Martin, 1, 2, 253
- Jerome, 67, 203, 205
- John Chrysostom, 109, 184, 199

- Joseph (biblical), 147, 148–51, 153, 158, 160, 161, 163–65, 166
- R. Joshua b. Ḥananyah, 41, 62, 65–66, 67–69, 99
- R. Judah, 174–77, 180, 181
- R. Judah, the Patriarch (“Rabbi”), 69–71, 205–10, 213, 218, 229
- and the redaction of the Mishnah, 11
- encounters with non-Jews, 128
- visual abstinence of, 139, 184
- Julian (Emperor), 55, 178, 226
- Kalmin, Richard, 195
- Leḥem hapanim*. *See* face-bread
- light. *See* luminosity; Zoroastrianism, and fire love
- “at first sight”, 4, 30, 113
- of God, 63, 109
- God’s, for Israel, 91–99, 103
- and vision, 113, 142–43
- luminosity
- and beauty, 157, 165
- and divinity, 41, 64n96, 78, 157n188
- misinterpretation of, 221–23
- of rabbis, 204, 207, 213, 218, 221–25, 227, 228–29, 245, 248
- and vision, 41
- See also* Torah learning, and light
- mabbat*. *See* vision, rabbinic terminology for
- martyrs, 143, 153, 157n189
- masculinity, 103–04, 117, 123–25, 153, 156–58, 160–63, 165–67, 255. *See also* gaze, masculine; imperialism, and masculinity
- master, rabbinic
- “seeing” or “receiving” the face of, 69, 79, 211–12, 231
- veneration of, 238, 239–40, 243–44
- and visual transmission of Torah learning, 207, 214–18
- matrona* (Roman matron), 222, 224
- medicine, 32, 34, 39, 131, 260
- R. Me’ir, 205–11, 212–13, 218, 229, 234, 236–37, 241
- menstruation, 36, 131, 133. *See also* purity, ritual
- midrash. *See* rabbis, interpretation of biblical sources
- Miller, Patricia Cox, 246
- mimesis, 54, 156, 180, 207n20, 251
- min* (heretic), 7, 62, 65–66, 67–68, 73, 80, 99, 222–23
- mique* (ritual bath), 160, 163, 164, 166, 255
- modesty, 91, 93, 128–29, 136, 144
- monasticism, 128–29, 136, 138–39, 141
- monks. *See* monasticism
- Moses
- encounters with God, 44, 48, 64–65, 90, 207–08, 210
- as the originator of rabbinic traditions, 213
- radiance of, 229
- veneration of, 233–36, 241
- Mulvey, Laura, 95, 116, 122, 123
- Naeh, Shlomo, 49, 86
- R. Naḥum bar Sima’y, 139, 183–84, 186, 190, 201
- nakedness. *See* ‘ervah (genital nakedness); genitalia
- Neoplatonists, 29, 55, 107, 178
- objectification, 122, 123, 144–46, 157
- officials
- nonrabbinic, critique of, 187, 233, 237–39, 246, 253
- Roman, 224–30, 239, 247–48
- ophthalmology, 3, 27, 32, 34
- optics. *See* vision, science of; theories of, in antiquity
- pardes* (orchard), 74
- parokhet* (curtain), 83, 90–93, 94, 96, 103
- patriarch (rabbinic)
- status of, 69, 70
- veneration due to, 205–06, 229, 231–33, 236, 241
- patriarchs (biblical)
- visual encounters with God, 44
- penis. *See* genitalia; phallus
- Persia
- Christians and, 33, 39
- and India, 34
- and the Roman empire, 33
- Sassanian, 7n15, 32, 34, 38, 106, 196, 250
- See also* Zoroastrianism
- perspective, 4, 23, 94
- phallus, 95, 125–28, 133, 140, 149, 159, 162, 168, 184. *See also* Vision, phallic
- Philo, 107, 170, 179–80
- philosophy, ancient, 19, 27–29, 75, 178
- physiognomy, 32, 148
- and “sacred physiognomics”, 213, 219–24, 226, 257
- physiology. *See* medicine
- piety, visual
- and Christian pilgrimage, 89
- in intra-rabbinic contexts, 231–51
- in late antiquity, 5, 10
- toward rabbinic figures, 187, 190, 224–30
- pilgrimage
- in the ancient Near East, 45
- in the Bible, 44–48, 82, 101

- cult objects and, 82–99, 101–02, 104, III, 167
 in Christianity, 83, 89, 101, III, 191n101, 193, 199, 251
 in the Greco-Roman world, 53, 55–56, 83, 84, 89, 101, III
 loss of, 15, 43, 53, 55, 60–63, 68–71, 82, 106, 108–09
 and “mystic viewing,” 53, 55, 196
 in the second temple period, 50
 as spectacle, 84, 99, 108
 and transgression of sacred boundaries, 50, 84, 89, 93, 97, 167
 and vision. *See re'iyah*
- Plato, 29, 75, 179
- prayer
 appropriate conditions for, 116, 117–20, 125, 130, 168
 choreography of, 112, 246
 and gender, 123
 interruption of, 225
 visualization of God during, 195
See also blessings; Shema (prayer)
- priests
 high priest, 137, 226, 228, 231–35, 241
 of idols, 188–89
 as mediators of access to the divine, 83n4, 90–91, 93–94, 96, 97–99, 103
 and pilgrimage, 50, 51, 85, 88, 93
 as visual objects, 77
- prohibition
 and mystical sights, 74
 as productive, 130, 169, 254, 258, 259
 and visual eros, 115, 125, 129–33, 135, 139–41, 151, 168, 257–58
- prophecy, visual nature of, 64–65
- prostitutes, 141–42, 143, 144–45, 153, 156, 219
- punishment, 133, 136, 152–53, 166, 185
 destruction of the temple as, 60, 65–67, 104
 loss of access to the divine as, 61–63
 violation of the holy of holies as, 99
- purity, ritual, 36, 49, 85, 89, 95
- Qimḥit, 137
- rabbis
 ability to recognize visually, 219–24, 226, 238, 247
 antipathy toward vision, 3, 172–73, 253–54
 Babylonian, 7n15, 32, 35, 79, 82, 187, 196, 204, 218, 239–44, 249–51, 260–61
 conflict among, 63, 166, 186–87, 205–06, 248
 divinity of, 211–12, 215, 217, 225, 229, 239, 245–46, 251
 gaze of, 23, 62, 64, 126, 158, 161, 201, 220
 hierarchical relationships among, 79, 186–87, 211–12, 231–33, 238, 239–44, 249
 as incarnations of Torah, 211, 213, 234–37, 239, 245–46, 251
 institutions of, 204, 211, 218, 245, 249, 251
 interpretation of biblical sources, 5, 44–47, 50, 51, 73, 174–77, 215
 in Jewish society, 5, 6, 12, 13, 223, 231–39, 246–47
 literary production of (rabbinic literature), 11–15, 23, 110, 252
 as a minority culture, 6n14, 8, 13, 171, 194, 199
 as a movement, 5, 11, 13, 113
 and non-Jews, 126, 194, 219–20, 222–23
 Christians, 39
 Persians, 249–51
 Roman officials, 224–30, 247–48
 Palestinian, 7n15, 35, 82, 159, 187, 192, 196, 199, 203, 224, 241–44, 245–47, 260–61
 sanctity of, 64, 69, 78, 208, 210–11, 220, 225–30, 236, 242, 248–52, 254
 and scholarly competition, 210, 242, 244, 245
 scholasticism of, 5, 75–76, 109, 204, 211, 218, 242, 244, 245
 “seeing” or “receiving” the face of, 70, 79, 204, 212, 231
 ugliness or disfigurement of, 221, 223
 visibility of, 205–07
 as visual objects, 69–73, 76, 158, 168, 187, 190, 202–52
 weeping over biblical verses, 60–61
See also icons, rabbis as; visibility, rabbinic
- radiance. *See* luminosity
- Rav Sheshet, 119, 121, 214, 242n171, 250n195
- re'iyah*
 in the Babylonian Talmud, 53–56, 60–66, 67–73, 78–81, 87–88, 99, 101–04, 106, 109, 142, 196
 biblical precedents for, 48, 101
 exemptions (or exclusions) from, 45–47, 48–52, 58, 70
 and gender, 47, 51, 54, 57, 92–96, 103–04
 and *hagigah*, 46, 47–48, 58
 mediated through “images,” 103
 in Palestinian sources, 56–60, 71–73, 80, 85–88, 97–100, 101–02, 104, 105, 108, III, 196
 performativity of, 96, 191n101, 193
re'iyat qorban (“seeing sacrifice”), 44, 46, 47–49, 52, 56–59, 87
 seeing sages as a replacement for, 69–73, 77, 79, 80, 110, 168, 244, 254
 in Tannaitic literature, 45–52, 53, 56, 57, 58, 76, 80, 83, 178

re'iyah (cont.)

- and visual reciprocity, 50–52, 59, 72–73, 80, 102, 142, 167, 178–79
- reciprocity. *See* gaze, reciprocal; *re'iyah*, and visual reciprocity
- regime, scopic, 6n14, 155, 156, 192–93
- representation
 - correspondence theory of, 19n4, 26, 262
 - modes of, 2, 21n12, 96, 103, 251
- revelation
 - through the rabbis, 187, 204, 206–08, 211, 213, 217–19, 239, 244, 252
 - at Sinai, 44, 47, 52, 59, 60, 207–08, 211, 212–13, 217–18, 229, 239, 241
 - visuality of, 213
 - See also* theophany
- sacrifice. *See* *re'iyah*, *re'iyat qorban* (“seeing sacrifice”)
- saints, cult of, 204, 251
- Sassanians. *See* Persia, Sassanian
- Schwartz, Seth, 71, 206n18, 232n135
- scopophilia, 27n36, 95, 116n12, 120n25. *See also* beauty, and visual pleasure
- second commandment, 2, 16, 43. *See also* aniconism; vision, Jewish resistance to senses, 132
 - relationship between, 24, 25, 180–81, 184
 - study of, 18–26
- shame, 93, 96, 97, 104, 108, 143, 156
- shekhinah* (God’s presence)
 - gazing at, 44
 - location of, 111–12
 - “seeing” or “receiving” the face of, 41, 69, 86, 128, 204, 211, 231
- Shema (prayer), 116, 118–20, 124, 130, 161, 231
- Shemesh, Aharon, 49–50
- sight. *See* senses; vision
- sin
 - idolatry and, 184–85
 - vision and, 7
 - and visual eros, 120, 121, 129, 131, 132, 136, 141
- Sinai. *See* revelation, at Sinai; sinai (term for a Torah scholar)
- sinai (term for a Torah scholar), 211, 231, 234, 235–36
- Singularity, Jewish, 43, 69, 101, 107, 108, 219–20, 261–62
- sotah* (woman suspected of adultery), 137, 142, 153
- spectacle, 27, 76, 84, 136, 153, 180, 185, 226. *See also* Pilgrimage, as spectacle
- Stoics, 29
- symmetry, visual. *See* *re'iyah*, and visual reciprocity

Talmud

- editorial arrangement of the Bavli, 61, 68, 72, 73, 92, 132, 135, 165, 205n15
- Palestinian figures in the Bavli, 66, 139, 141–42, 146, 159, 163, 218, 240, 243, 244, 250
- use of Palestinian material in the Bavli, 15, 72, 87, 92, 135, 142, 163, 211, 240–42, 244, 249
- Talmud torah* (Torah study)
 - distraction from, 212–13, 225, 254
 - and divine viscosity, 110, 254
 - and the rabbinic project, 5, 6, 11, 251
- Tannaim. *See* rabbis
- temple
 - destruction of, 42, 43, 60, 63, 66, 81, 107, 109, 111, 255
 - implements of. *See* cult objects
 - nostalgia for, 15, 43, 60, 105
 - as residence of the divine, 111–12
 - and restriction of entry into sacred space, 48–50, 58, 84, 243
 - See also* cult objects; pilgrimage
- Tertullian, 120, 122, 170, 172, 180, 185–86, 199
- textuality, 13, 251, 252. *See also* viscosity, and textuality
- theophany
 - biblical, 44, 207–08
 - and cult objects, 82, 85–87, 99, 101, 105
 - rabbinic laws on expounding, 74–77
 - and Torah study, 212–13
 - See also* cult objects, as representations of the divine; revelation, at Sinai
- Torah learning
 - and light, 207, 209–10, 213, 217–18, 224
 - transmission of, 6, 17, 206–10, 212–18, 229, 245–46, 248, 251
 - visibility of, 213, 215–18, 224, 245
- Torah scrolls, 111, 211, 245
- touch. *See* Vision, and touch (“haptic vision”)
- tselem elohim*. *See* *imago dei*
- vagina, 118–22, 131, 133, 184. *See also* genitalia
- veneration
 - excessive, 244, 246
 - standing, 224–25, 231–39, 240–41
 - See also* piety, visual
- viewer, 94, 258
 - implied, 94
- viewing
 - mystical, 53, 55, 75, 171, 178, 196, 200
 - naturalistic, 103n85, 104n89
 - sacred, 17, 104n89, 173, 174, 177–80, 189, 196
- violence, 31, 156–58, 166, 180, 185, 189
 - sexual, 152–53, 158

vision

- and the auditory, 2, 213, 215, 248
- and cognition, 19, 75–76
- consumptive, 74, 84, 93n52, 121, 128, 180
- dangers of, 31, 78, 133, 144, 168, 169, 170, 173, 180–81
- denigration of, 1, 2
- extramissive, 8, 31, 63, 89, 123, 134, 143, 155, 186, 188–89, 194
- history of, 3, 4, 5, 8, 15, 24, 25, 178
- and idolatry, 2, 9, 16, 97–101, 170–201, 234
- and image-making, 2, 18n2, 172, 185
- intellectualization of, 24, 25
- intromissive, 5, 8, 31, 134, 143, 155, 180, 185
- Jewish resistance to, 3, 21n12, 253–54
- and knowledge, 212–18
- and memory, 193, 204, 212, 217, 246
- over-privileging of, 24
- phallic, 121, 122–24, 133, 140, 142, 143–44, 255
- and pleasure, 55, 95, 115, 122–23, 147, 169, 178, 180, 192
- and the political, 16, 24, 27, 43
- and power, 24, 25, 145, 161, 162–63, 227–28
- rabbinic terminology for, 76, 124, 127
- rabbinization of, 10
- reciprocal. *See* gaze, reciprocal; Homovisuality; *re'iyah*, and visual reciprocity
- and reproduction. *See* eugenics, visual science of, 4, 26, 260
- and sexuality, 16, 30, 36, 39, 95, 102, 113–69, 184, 256
- slipperiness of, 30, 113, 134, 156
- and technology, 3, 4
- theories of, in antiquity
 - Babylonian, 35, 64, 134, 148
 - Greco-Roman, 3, 27–31, 63, 134, 136, 148, 212, 220

Indian, 35, 89n32, 131n64

Persian, 32–39, 64, 89n32, 131n64

and touch (“haptic vision”), 31, 89, 113, 123, 130, 134, 139, 158, 168, 184, 259

and visuality, 2, 3, 25

visuality

Christian

and divine visibility, 107

and holiness, 251

and rabbinic culture, 10

and Roman imperialism, 228, 256

and visual eros, 128–29, 136, 138–39, 143–46

definition of, 2, 4, 25

Greco-Roman, 3, 5, 10, 95, 134, 136, 251

and the late-antique “visual turn,” 5, 10, 17, 204, 230

and textuality, 23, 110, 171–72

Zoroastrian, 35–39, 64, 101, 105–07, 250

voyeurism, 24, 93, 96, 104, 137

Yerushalmi. *See* Talmud

R. Yohanan, 141, 205, 222–23, 225

beauty of, 158–67, 190, 245

gendering of, 158–67, 255

as an icon, 159, 190

relationships with rabbinic colleagues, 186–87, 207, 212

statements of, on idolatry, 181–83, 187

as a visual object, 158–67, 202

Zoroastrianism, 35–39, 64, 101, 105–07, 250

and fire, 36, 38

gêtig, 37, 106n95, 250

mênôg, 37, 38, 105, 106n95, 250

See also visuality, Zoroastrian